SUPPORTING LAID OFF WORKERS IN HAMILTON: THE VALUE OF EMPLOYMENT TRAINING AT THE HAMILTON JOBS ACTION CENTRE FINAL REPORT

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Recognizing the need to respond to the quickly growing numbers of unemployed workers in Hamilton, the United Way of Burlington and Greater Hamilton, the Ministry of Training, Colleges, and Universities, and the Social Planning and Research Council of Hamilton partnered to create the Hamilton Jobs Action Centre (HJAC) in 2009. Aimed at supporting smaller groups of laid off workers from the area as a complement to the existing system of employment services, HJAC opened its doors in Fall 2009.

The purposes of this research are to: determine the value of short-term employment related workshops accessed by dislocated workers at HJAC; explore options for maximizing these benefits to laid off workers and to the wider unemployed/underemployed population; and explore the best venues for providing this type of training. The recent economic downturn put many people out of work, driving Hamilton's Employment Insurance claims dramatically upward in early 2009. With a slow economic recovery across Canada likely to be slower still in Hamilton, the need for supports for often invisible small groups of dislocated workers in this community is not likely to decline in the near future. Assessing the value of short-term employment related workshops in helping workers reconnect with the labour market offers a fuller understanding of how best to support groups of dislocated workers. The evaluation of this form of training in Hamilton focuses on the HJAC as a site in which to explore this important issue. Data for this research was collected through a review of literature, 154 client surveys, 15 client interviews, 5 staff interviews, 3 employer interviews, and a focus group with local employment service providers. Key findings from each primary research method are summarized below.

Key Findings from Client Surveys

- There is diversity in the client population in terms of different levels of education. Half of clients are 'older workers' (45 years of age or more). This suggests a need for diversity of employment service approaches.
- Most clients (84%) took a maximum of 4 courses. This suggests that free training encourages people to engage in employment related activities.
- Of the 652 clients who came to HJAC for support, only 270 – or 41% - took training courses. This suggests that clients completed training to suit their employment goals, rather than simply taking advantage of free training.
- Completing more workshops was associated with better employment outcomes. Half (50%) of the 652 clients who have come to HJAC for support have found work since coming to the centre, while 61% of surveyed clients who completed training have found work. Further, most clients rated workshops as helpful in finding work both in terms of numbered scores and open-ended questions. This suggests that the short-term employment related workshops offered at HJAC improve client employment outcomes.
- One of HJAC's greatest strengths is its peer helper staff members, who were seen as helpful, supportive and motivating. This suggests that employment services and supports offered by people who are not necessarily from the same former workplace but have shared experiences of a layoff or shutdown provides a unique benefit to clients.

Key Findings from Client Interviews

- Respondents use a variety of sources to job search including the HJAC job board, Service Canada's job bank, newspapers, on-line employment related websites, personal networks and word-of-mouth.
- While most respondents described an abundance of jobs to apply for, many were not getting called for interviews. Respondents cited limited qualifications, experience and age (for many older workers) as possible reasons for not getting interviews.
- Overall, temporary positions seemed to be more common in the job market.
- Temporary work was valued by some respondents because of the flexibility it offers to workers and employers.

- Most respondents felt some degree of resentment about temporary work because of low pay, no benefits, and no job security. Temporary work also seen as impacting respondents' quality of life, feelings of fairness, health, and difficulties transitioning to full-time work.
- Most respondents felt that they had either learned new skills or recertified existing skills through workshops they completed at HJAC. Obtaining official certification of skills gained through work experience was viewed as important for gaining employment.
- Respondents with diverse training felt that it qualified them for a wider range of jobs and would help them find work.
- Respondents generally felt that the qualifications earned through HJAC either helped them secure their current job or that the qualifications would help them secure work in the future.
- All respondents appreciated the welcoming and relaxed nature of HJAC. Although many clients said they did not use the centre as a social support, an overwhelming majority of respondents valued the peer support model highly. Primarily, they felt that they could relate well to the peer helpers at the centre because "they know what you are going through."

Key Findings from Staff Interviews

- HJAC staff members see the four main chalienges faced by their clients as being a lack of computer skills, age, education, and transportation. Computer skills in particular are likely to be increasingly important for workers in the job market as workplaces rely more and more on technology.
- HJAC should support clients in obtaining their high school equivalency credentials in order to improve employment outcomes.
- Bus tickets could be made available to support clients in job searching in order to overcome some barriers to transportation.
- Job opportunities posted at HJAC over the past year commonly involved forklift, manufacturing, general labour, and cleaning.
- Temporary and contract jobs seem to be growing. Contract work may develop into full-time employment if the employer is willing to commit.
- Most employment opportunities at HJAC are of poor quality in terms of wages and benefits.
- Some clients take a small number of courses in order to fill specific job requirements, while others take a diverse range of courses. Staff noted that this makes clients more marketable and widens their scope of opportunities.
- Many clients tell staff that they want the centre to connect them with employers. This essentially amounts to the role of a temp agency, except that the centre would not be the employer or receive payment from employers.

Key Findings from Employer Interviews

- The recent recession led to a slowdown in hiring, and recovery was characterized by an increase in temporary work.
- While there is a mix of positions available locally, temporary work seems to dominate the job market.
- One respondent felt that workers were "happy" and "grateful" to have temporary work, while others felt that temp workers faced feelings of isolation and unfair treatment.
- Wages and lack of benefits were further sources of frustration for workers, particularly in contrast with previous working conditions.
- Workers' progress from temporary work to full-time, permanent employment often takes between 6 months and 2 years, and is fairly rare.
- Most employers require employees to have a high school diploma either for initial hiring or to transition to full-time positions.
- Workers require a balance of credentials and experience.
- Clients' completion of high school equivalency should be supported in the community in order to improve employment outcomes.
- Services in the community should work with clients to identify current skills, employment goals, gaps between the two and support actions to fill those gaps.

- Organizations working with the unemployed/underemployed population, including employment services and action centres, should develop relationships directly with employers or strengthen relationships with each other in order to better connect clients to employers.

Key Findings from Service Provider Focus Group

- Because of their short-term nature and specific skills focus, workshops offered at HJAC were seen as particularly valuable.
- Training should be targeted to each individual's work related goals.
- The Skills Development Flagship could better mobilize as a network in order to be more responsive to the diverse employment support needs in the community.
- Confusion and changing eligibility requirements to receive training at HJAC lead to frustration for clients and service providers referring clients to HJAC.
- Some service provider participants felt that funding for training could be distributed to established employment service providers to allow them to provide some of the workshops currently offered through HJAC.
- HJAC has the potential to fill the gap of serving dislocated workers in groups too small to have their own action centre. The culture of the centre offers an environment that some clients find more comfortable. In this way HJAC was seen as being able to augment what is offered in the community from the six major employment service providers.
- Peer helpers offer valuable emotional support after job loss, although HJAC's peer helpers are not always from the same companies as clients.
- Much of what employment counsellors do is motivating and helping clients through personal issues. Accordingly, peer support is not the only way to support dislocated workers through emotional challenges.

Based on these findings, the report makes the following recommendations.

Recommendations

1. These short-term employment related workshops should be available in the community.
2. Employment services in Hamilton should include opportunities for peer support.
3. Employment services for smaller groups of dislocated workers should be made available in the community. The employment service community, including community agencies and government, should strengthen networks to identify and outreach to smaller groups of laid off workers.
4. All levels of government should consider the impacts of temp work in general - and temp agencies in specific - on workers in Hamilton. Governments should consider looking to other models of casual or labour force coordination, such as that used in the former Canada Manpower Office.
5. A diverse range of employment services should be available in the community in order to effectively reach groups with different needs and preferences.
6. Local agencies and the community more broadly should support adults seeking employment in obtaining their high school diplomas or equivalency certificates.
7. Action centres and employment service agencies should work more closely together to connect clients with employers, possibly through job developers. This could involve developing better referral mechanisms for clients in order to tap into existing relationships between employment service providers and employers.
8. Community partners, possibly including the Hamilton Street Railway, the City of Hamilton, and other agencies, should collaborate to improve access to affordable transportation for job seekers. This could entail increased funding for bus tickets or changes to eligibility requirements for the Affordable Transit Pass.

1.0 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

In June 2009, a partnership between the United Way of Burlington and Greater Hamilton, the Ministry of Training, Colleges, and Universities (MTCU), and the Social Planning and Research Council of Hamilton (SPRC) launched the creation of the Hamilton Jobs Action Centre (HJAC). Aimed at supporting smaller groups of laid off workers (less than 50) from the area as a complement to the existing system of employment services, HJAC opened its doors in Fall 2009.

HJAC uses a labour adjustment or action centre[1] model, which aims to assist laid off workers as a result of closure or downsizing by their employer. Action centres are often established in situations where a workplace has experienced a layoff or shutdown affecting 50 or more workers. An action centre's three main objectives for helping workers are to: provide workers with the skills and knowledge to gain re-employment; enable workers to learn about new vocational or training directions that may lead to employment opportunities; and ensure that workers and their families receive the necessary support required to cope during their period of unemployment.

In the traditional adjustment centre model, when 50 or more workers from one workplace are laid off, an advisor from the Adjustment Advisor Program (AAP) from MTCU works with labour and, if possible, management to establish an centre specific to that workplace. AAP meets with company management and representatives of the employees to explain the labour adjustment process and the terms of an agreement to set up a Labour Adjustment Committee. The government and the company reps negotiate the terms of the committee agreement. A budget is set based on the number of workers affected and the kind of services anticipated. The main costs include committee members' and Chairperson's remuneration, fees for professional services depending on need, and operating costs for an Action Centre.

Dislocated workers from that place of work are hired as peer helpers, and workers support one another in adjusting to unemployment, possibly through re-entry in the labour market or early retirement. The cornerstone of the employee adjustment model is the use of 'peer helpers' who have also experienced a layoff or shutdown at the same company as clients. Peer helpers are trained to support clients in job search activities, but also provide a level of emotional support as they have similar lived experience. Action centres also typically connect clients to training as appropriate. This model begins with the total number of dislocated workers and gradually works until the majority of workers are adjusted. In this way, action centres are typically a temporary measure to address an urgent issue based in a single workplace at a time.

When fewer than 50 workers are laid off from a single workplace at one time, workers can access mainstream employment services in the community on an individual basis. Since HJAC's opening, the MTCU has reorganized how employment services are delivered in Hamilton – the new Employment Ontario Network – and now fund 6 agencies to deliver the same suite of employment services across the city. These agencies are: VPI, Mohawk College, Employment Hamilton, YMCA, Goodwill-Amity, and Wesley Urban Ministries.

While using the adjustment model, HJAC is not a workplace-specific action centre, but instead is a community action centre that serves smaller groups of dislocated workers from a number of workplaces throughout the community who would not qualify to start their own action centre with MTCU. Those involved with HJAC's creation saw that locally Hamilton had effective action centres for steelworkers and autoworkers, and saw a need for this kind of service for smaller groups of dislocated workers. According to the initial agreement that formalized HJAC's creation, the centre was to "serve laid-off work groups numbering under 100 affected workers who are not served by other Labour Adjustment services".

Part of the HJAC committee's original strategy for connecting with these smaller groups of dislocated workers was to accept individual clients and work with them to identify and connect with former co-workers. Just prior to opening, the committee was directed by MTCU not to accept individual clients. This

[1] The 'adjustment model' operates through 'action centres,' and these terms are used interchangeably throughout this report.

made connecting with smaller groups of workers more difficult because HJAC could neither advertise nor connect with groups through individual clients.

Finding these groups is also difficult for other reasons. Companies will sometimes lay off just under 50 workers in a four week period, which means they are not required to report the layoffs to the Ministry of Labour. This kind of situation is not widely reported and groups of workers are often not organized, which makes both finding out about and connecting with such groups difficult. In HJAC's early efforts to connect with these groups, two members of the Labour Adjustment Committee approached several companies to offer their workers information about the HJAC and were often told either that groups of workers had been recently laid off (and so were hard to reach) or that no layoffs were imminent, though layoffs often took place after employers made these claims. After some of these fruitless encounters with employers, MTCU's representative on the HJAC committee allowed the centre to advertise in order to better connect with groups of dislocated workers.

Despite these challenges, groups of workers have come to HJAC from companies such as Canadian Linen, Dover Cone, Voith, Maple Leaf, Burlington Technologies, US Steel, Lakeport, Frost Fencing, Hood Packaging, and Karma Candy. Half of these companies have not had their own action centre. In total, 652 clients have come to HJAC for support. Of these, 326 people – or 50% - have found jobs since first coming to the centre.

Like in the traditional adjustment model, HJAC provides short-term employment related workshops that provide recertification and qualification. Twelve (12) short-term employment related workshops are offered through HJAC, ranging from job search to specific marketable skills required for certain jobs (e.g. forklift operator, transportation of dangerous goods, etc.). To date, 270 clients of HJAC have participated in short-term employment related courses, ranging from 1 to 8 courses per client. The total number of clients who have taken each course is shown in Table 1 below.

Table1: Number of HJAC Clients Who Completed Each Training Course

Course Name	Number of Clients Who Completed Course
Forklift	227
First Aid	233
WHMIS	140
Safe Food Handling	180
Smart Serve	67
Transportation of Dangerous Goods	100
Overhead Crane	86
Fall Protection	96
Confined Spaces	16
Job Workshop	40
Interviewing Skills	18
Computer	30

Over the course of HJAC's brief existence, requirements for who was eligible to receive training and/or be an official HJAC client have changed a number of times, and this has led to some confusion and frustration for clients and other local employment service providers. HJAC's agreement with MTCU ends June 30, 2011, and no new clients are being accepted at this time.

Often one or two workers from a given workplace would come in to HJAC and let staff know that more people from that workplace had been laid off. From there, HJAC would work backwards to try to reach out to these workers through their former colleagues, which is a time consuming process.

As in the original agreement that initiated the centre, HJAC is partially staffed by "peer helpers recruited from the ranks of the affected workers." This is similar to the traditional adjustment model, but 'peers' are defined more broadly than in the traditional model. The traditional definition only includes peers from one

shared former workplace, whereas HJAC peer helpers are peers in that they have also experienced a layoff or shut down in greater Hamilton, though not necessarily from the same workplace.

The purpose of this research is to determine the value of training accessed by dislocated workers at HJAC. The goals of this research are to:

- Determine the benefits of completing short-term employment related workshops through the HJAC
- Explore options for maximizing these benefits to laid off workers and to the wider unemployed/underemployed population, and
- Explore the best venues and approaches to providing this type of training

The following chapters of this report outline the methods used in the research, and findings from each method. The final chapter offers conclusions and recommendations to improving access to skills training and employment supports to the unemployed/underemployed population in Hamilton based on these findings.

Key conclusions emerging from this study are:

- Short-term employment related courses are useful.
- Peer support is a key component of what is valuable at HJAC.
- Connecting small groups to employment services is challenging.
- Temp work is growing and impacts workers' wellbeing.
- HJAC serves an under-serviced group, particularly older workers who may be uncomfortable with mainstream employment services.
- Education is a key credential for gaining employment or moving from temporary to permanent positions.
- Clients want direct links with employers through support agencies.
- Transportation is a barrier to accessing employment.

2.0 METHODOLOGY

This study used a mix of quantitative and qualitative research methods in order to determine the benefits of completing skills development courses through the HJAC, and to explore options for maximizing these benefits to laid off workers and to the wider unemployed/underemployed population. This included exploring the best venues and approaches to providing this type of training.

The current research evolved from an earlier project exploring the experiences of dislocated workers who were enrolled in longer-term employment related education or training programs such as Second Career. This earlier research aimed to build on a report by the Hamilton Training and Advisory Board (HTAB), which found that lack of awareness of available training programs was a significant barrier to potential beneficiaries' access to those programs. SPRC staff launched a survey of dislocated workers who were enrolled in further education or retraining (Ontario's Second Career or HRSDC's Skills Development). Respondents were referred to the researcher through five local employment agencies: Amity-Goodwill, Mohawk Job Connect, Employment Hamilton, VPI, and the John Howard Society. In total, 40 respondents completed the original survey (Appendix A). This represented a low response rate and so the research was redesigned with a slightly different focus, now looking at shorter-term training for displaced workers, and greater opportunity to access respondents directly through the Hamilton Jobs Action Centre (HJAC). Findings from the original survey have been incorporated into the analysis of the current phase of research (see Chapter 5).

Secondary research included a review relevant literature (including academic articles, government and other professional reports) on the following topics: retraining for dislocated workers, older workers, the adjustment centre model, precarious employment and peer support. A labour market profile was also generated from the most recent Statistics Canada data available (up to November, 2010) to highlight recent employment trends in Hamilton.

Primary research consisted of three phases: a broad-based telephone survey with HJAC clients who completed training; key informant interviews with HJAC clients, staff, and local employers; and a focus group with local employment services providers.

2.1 Broad-based Survey

Of the 652 clients who came to HJAC for support, only 270 – or 41% - took training courses. Clients who came to HJAC for support but did not complete training (382 clients) were not included in this research project. Clients who completed at least one training course at HJAC were surveyed by telephone between October and December, 2010 about whether and what types of employment they had found since first coming to HJAC, which courses they felt were or would be most useful in terms of finding work, and what other types of training could be beneficial (Appendix B). Clients' phone numbers were accessed from client files at HJAC, which were given voluntarily by clients. Prior to clients being called, client information sheets were completed using client files at HJAC, and resumes in particular, to collect basic information such as gender, level of education, and length of unemployment.

Surveys were conducted by the Research Assistant from SPRC and a peer helper trained by the Research Assistant. Participation was voluntary. Surveys took between 5 and 30 minutes, with most surveys taking 10 minutes to complete. In total, 154 telephone surveys out of a possible 242 were completed, representing a 63.6% response rate[2]. Clients were called from the HJAC office during days, evenings, and weekends. Two messages (voice mail or in-person) per client were left where possible. When clients were not available, surveyors asked when a convenient time would be to reach the client. Clients were telephoned at numbers they had previously provided to HJAC at various times of the week and day in order to attempt to accommodate clients with different schedules. To the extent possible, clients were called back at times suggested by them or those with whom messages were left.

[2] As of October 27, 2010, 270 clients had received training at HJAC. Of these, 28 files were removed from the sample for personal reasons as it was determined by the research team in consultation with HJAC staff that contacting those clients for the survey would have been an unnecessary disruption. Thus a total possible sample size of clients who had received training was 242.

2.1 Key informant interviews

Key issues raised in the survey phase were explored further in key informant interviews with 15 clients (Appendix C), 5 HJAC staff members (Appendix D), and 3 employers (Appendix E), for a total of 23 interviews. In the interests of time, rather than conducting separate interviews, a focus group was held with the four peer helpers. Because the coordinator interview and peer helper focus group used the same interview guide (Appendix D), and to maintain confidentiality, findings from these phases of research are discussed together (see Chapter 8). Most interviews were conducted by phone, while staff interviews/focus group were in person at HJAC. Interviews were conducted between November 2010 and January 2011, and lasted between 5 and 40 minutes, with most interviews taking roughly 20 minutes to complete. Interviews focused on challenges that HJAC clients commonly face, the value of different kinds of credentials and experience, experiences and impacts of precarious work, HJAC services and how they could be improved, and possible benefits of the peer support model. Client interviewees were selected from clients who participated in the survey who gave more detailed responses than average and that together roughly matched the client profiles of the survey population (see Chapter 5.0 Survey findings). Interviews were designed to add depth to our understanding of findings from the survey phase of the research.

2.2 Service Provider Focus Group

A focus group was held in with local employment service providers in January 2011 in order to consider key challenges found in earlier phases of the research and begin to generate possible responses to these challenges. The purpose of this focus group was to reflect on preliminary findings and discuss the best venues and approaches to providing this type of training in order to maximize the benefits to laid off workers and to the wider unemployed/underemployed population (Appendix F).

3.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

This section of the report summarizes academic literature, as well as government and other research reports, to review relevant findings, which gives some context to the conclusions of this report.

3.1 Dislocated workers and adjustment model

'Dislocated' or 'displaced' workers are terms used to describe individuals who have lost their jobs not because of their own job performance or cyclical changes in employment, but as a result of structural economic changes (Schore and Atkin, 1992; HRDC, 1997). Dislocated workers often require support including training, job searching support and counselling to help them adjust to unemployment and possibly re-enter the workforce (HRDC 1997).

The effects of corporate restructuring, globalization, outsourcing, privatization, deregulation and the advancement of technology have had major impacts on national, provincial and local labour markets[3]. As governments and the private sector adapt to these changes, workers are often left to negotiate an ever-changing labour market. This can be particularly challenging for laid off workers attempting to re-enter the labour market after a company downsize or shutdown.

In an effort to address these issues, the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (MTCU) provides an Adjustment Advisory Program (AAP). While the program offers support to employers and communities adjusting to change, there is a specific focus on ensuring a smooth transition for workers re-entering the labour market after a company shutdown or downsize. This work is done through employee adjustment committees, which are sometimes established when companies announce a downsize or shutdown affecting more than fifty employees.

In 1963, Canada began the Industrial Adjustment Service (IAS) as a way of solving human resource adjustment problems resulting from technological and market changes (MTCU, 2004). The goals of the IAS were to ensure job enrichment, job re-design, and quality of work life, contributing to improved productivity and the general economy.

By 1980, Ontario was in a recession and many plant closures and downsizing led the Ontario government to become involved in labour adjustment services. Currently the employee adjustment services are provided provincially by the MTCU and are referred to as the Adjustment Advisory Program (AAP).

The mandate of the AAP includes providing adjustment services that help communities to anticipate, respond to, and manage changes in the local labour market, and to assist displaced workers in dealing with their job loss through employee adjustment programs. The province employs adjustment advisors across Ontario to support workers involved in mass layoffs to reconnect with the labour force. A mass layoff is defined in the Employment Standards Act, 2000 as a layoff of 50 or more workers over a four-week period.

Once a layoff is reported to the Ministry of Labour, MTCU is contacted and an Adjustment Advisor contacts the company and union (if there is one) to determine if there is interest in adjustment. If the parties are interested in adjustment, a Labour Adjustment Committee is formed. The committee must be a joint committee of those individuals who are affected by the change and those who have expertise in managing that change. This would include workers, employers where possible, government, and service providers as well as other community partners who might be identified as stakeholders in a particular situation. Once a Labour Adjustment Committee has been struck with the support of MTCU, the committee generally takes the actions described in Table 2 below (though the process may vary slightly depending on when AAP gets involved).

[3] The remainder of section 3.1 is a modified excerpt from a report entitled "An Assessment of Employee Adjustment in Hamilton," prepared by Mark Fraser and Deirdre Pike of the Social Planning and Research Council of Hamilton for the Hamilton Training Advisory Board (SPRC, 2005).

Table 2: Actions in Establishing an Action Centre

Actions	Descriptions
Establish committee, provide training for committee members and assign roles such as Secretary and Treasurer	The Labour Adjustment Committee is formally established, including assignment of positions. Committee members receive training necessary to carry out the functions of the committee and Action Centre.
Inform workers of adjustment	Workers may be informed at the workplace if layoffs are known to be coming in the near future. When layoffs are not announced in advance informing workers of adjustment opportunities is more difficult.
Selection process for chairperson	The chairperson coordinates and facilitates committee meetings.
Selection process for co-ordinator position	The Coordinator acts as a resource to the committee and manages the employee action centre (see below).
Selection process for peer helpers	Peer helpers are drawn from employees in the company that is laying off.
Sets up an action centre	An action centre is the physical location where employment supports are provided to laid off workers.
Determines worker needs either through surveys or formal needs assessments	To determine the most appropriate mix of programs and services to support workers.
Identifies appropriate service providers	Identify and contract with local employment services to provide relevant programs and services.
Conducts outreach and follow-up	Ongoing contact with workers to connect workers with adjustment activities.
Manages the adjustment process	Oversees the adjustment process, makes decisions, and monitors outcomes.

3.2 Older workers face unique challenges

In periods where many workers had distinct transitions between work and retirement, retirement benefits were often adequate to support older displaced workers. Today many older displaced workers do not have access to such security, and instead require more active supports to help them re-enter the workforce. When older workers are displaced they generally endure longer periods of unemployment than their younger counterparts, and also earn an average of 55-65% (from all sources) of their earnings before layoffs (HRDC, 1997). Even when displaced manufacturing workers do regain employment, one study found that wages and benefits are on average $10,000 per year less than in their previous employment (Foster and Schore, 1989).

Older displaced workers often face a number of barriers to re-entry into the labour market, including lack of job search skills, lack of skills in growing industries, relatively low educational attainment, less willingness to relocate, preconceived notions about older workers (i.e. discrimination), fewer opportunities for retraining, and training programs that are not designed to meet needs of older learners (HRDC, 1997; Tikkanen et al., 2002). In fact, no Canadian legislation currently protects against discrimination in employment practices relating to older workers. For these and other reasons, it is not surprising that older displaced workers have lower levels of reintegration into the labour market after being displaced (HRDC, 1997).

These challenges are not faced evenly by all older workers, however. Older workers in service industries are often seen as offering employers advantages such as higher retention rates, loyalty, dependability, better customer service skills, and the ability to relate to older clients (Pillay et al., 2006; Imel, 1991). Still, in the words of a report from the Office of Technology Assessment in Washington D.C., "the attitudes of management are the greatest hurdle older workers face" (1990, p. 252).

3.3 Retraining can help older workers find employment

In times of economic recession and with fewer jobs available, workers often seek further training and education in order to appear more competitive in the labour market (Shamash and Sims, 2009). Workers anticipating changing industries after being dislocated are particularly likely to undertake training as a strategy to offset significant income declines from the transition (Jacobson, LaLonde and Sullivan, 2005a; Neal, 1995).

Older workers in particular have been shown benefit from training in terms of employment outcomes or wages (Jacobson et al., 2005a; HRDC, 1997). Discerning which kinds of training yield the most benefits to workers – for example, community college versus shorter vocational courses - is difficult, however, because most studies do not make such distinctions (Thomson et al., 2005; Jacobson et al., 2005a) and researchers emphasize the importance of separating out which kinds of training lead to better employment outcomes (Rocha and McCant, 1999). Still, there is evidence to suggest that technical or vocational courses can boost earnings by as much as 14-29% (Jacobson et al., 2003; 2005b).

Although older workers stand to benefit significantly from training, many employers are reluctant to invest in retraining older workers because of concerns that workers will not work long enough to make the investment worthwhile (OTA, 1990). Perceptions that older workers may possess less ability to be trained, though unfounded, are also common (OTA, 1990). In fact, one review of studies in the U.S. found no reliable evidence that workers under 70 years of age have diminished cognitive capacity that would inhibit training (Simpson 2005; Ferrier et al., 2008).

Outcomes from training older workers are also consistently better when learning environments and tactics are tailored specifically to older learners (Ferrier et al., 2008; Dunn, 2005; Thomson et al., 2005; HRDC, 1997). Specific techniques include making sure workers are comfortable with any technology being used, recognizing and building on life experiences, using peer mentoring and allowing for frequent social interaction (Ferrier et al., 2008). Employing peer instructors can also contribute to making retraining environments more comfortable as peers can often relate more easily to learners' life experiences (Schweke, 2004).

3.4 Many of the jobs available now are forms of precarious work

The reality that many dislocated workers of all ages face today is the growing proportion of precarious work. 'Precarious work' is defined as employment with some combination of little security, low wages, and few if any benefits (D'Amours, 2009; Vosko, 2006). Another aspect of precarious work is that it generally offers few opportunities for skills development or promotion (Jackson, 2003)

While precarious work is growing in general, women and youth are more likely to be working in precarious jobs than other groups (Young, 2010; Vosko, 2006, 2000; Mills, 2004). Not surprisingly, the fact that women are more likely to work in precarious jobs contributes to their lower average wages than men (Young, 2010). A study on youth working irregular shifts noted that most do so "against their own will" (Mills 2004 p.132).

Precarious work can negatively impact workers' health. While health outcomes for different groups of precarious workers (through temporary agencies, on short-term contracts, or self-employed) vary, one study found "workers employed through temporary agencies reported the poorest health" of these groups and workers with full-time employment (Lewchuk et al., 2008, p.394). The study's authors call for stronger legislation to protect workers in such precarious employment situations and avoid preventable population health crises (Lewchuk et al., 2008).

3.5 The difference that peer support makes

Amid these challenges, peer support, which is a key feature of the adjustment centre model, can help dislocated workers with both employment outcomes and emotional support. Peer counsellors (sometimes referred to as peer support specialists) in most adjustment centres are dislocated from the same workplace as adjustment centre clients (Schweke, 2004). Peer counsellors provide clients with information about available services, support job search and/or retraining activities, maintain records of clients and their efforts at the centre, and other activities (Schweke, 2004).

Using peer counsellors in service provision to help dislocated workers adjust to unemployment can help reduce stigma associated with accessing support services. Peer support can also build trust, normalize support, and make programs more effective (Schore and Atkin, 1992). This is partly because of a more informal and relaxed environment at action centres, but also because of familiarity and shared experience between staff and clients. Further, services are more likely to be used by displaced workers when they are located where clients would go for another reason, integrated with other services, and counseling is destigmatized (Schore and Atkin 1992, p.90).

Models of employment services that use peer counselling, such as job finding clubs, have produced promising employment outcomes – as high as 70% client placement, 80% of whom were employed in full-time positions- while a comparable government-run program that did not use peer counselors had only 40% of clients find employment (HRDC, 1997, p.35). While employment services adapt to changing circumstances over time and each program is slightly different, literature on employment services shows that mainstream programs are often "not well suited for the unemployed older workers" (HRDC, 1997, p.35). In such cases, the unique value of peer support in employment services increases.

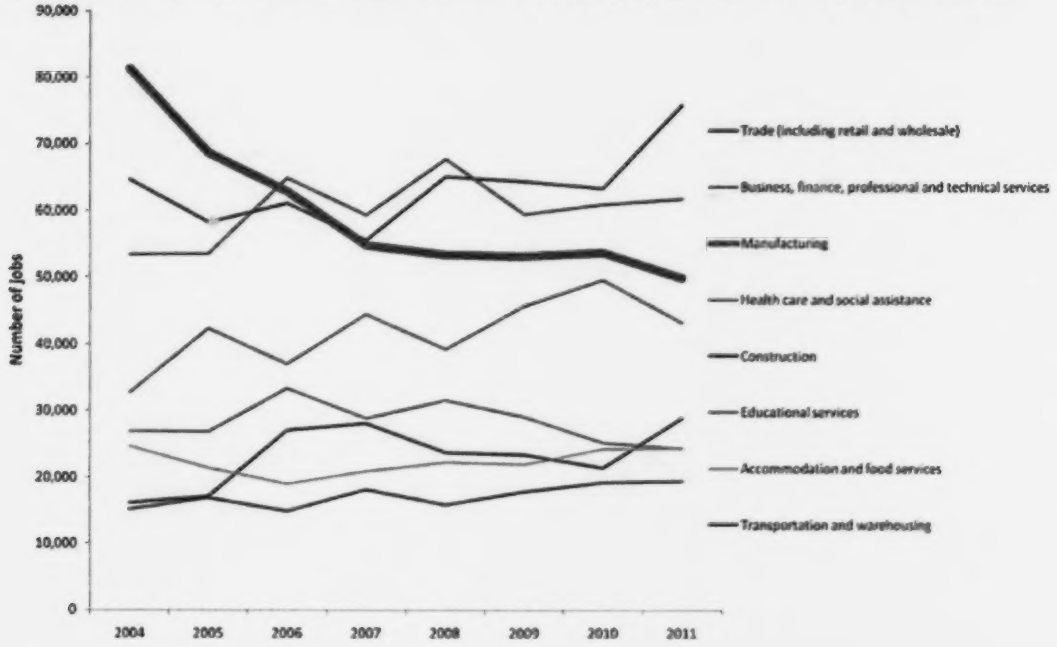
4.0 LABOUR MARKET PROFILE

In order to better understand the context in which HJAC clients are adjusting to unemployment, SPRC staff developed this labour market profile highlight recent employment trends. Looking at changes in employment levels in different industries in Hamilton over time shows which industries are declining, which are growing, and when these trends begin and change. Examining employment insurance benefits recipient and Ontario Works caseloads offers a partial picture of how some workers who are dealing with job loss in terms of government financial support. Each of these elements of the labour market profile are graphed and discussed below.

4.1 Employment by Industry

Figure 1 below shows the number of jobs for various industries in Hamilton from 2004 to 2011. Because this chart begins several years before the recession began, it is possible to see how industries were affected differently by the recession.

Figure 1: Estimated employment by industry (selected industries), Hamilton CMA, 2004-2011 (January of each year), Source: Statistics Canada. Graph prepared by Sara Mayo, SPRC, 2011.



If we take 2008 to be the height of the recession, we can see that the business, finance, and technical services sector experienced a sharp decline in employment levels. At the same time, health care and social assistance experienced employment growth. In contrast, the graph also shows that the manufacturing sector had been experiencing a significant decline since 2004, and in fact experienced only a slight decline from 2008 to 2009.

4.2 Employment Insurance and Ontario Works

In the same time period, Employment Insurance (EI) claims varied in fairly regular cycles until December 2008, when they had a striking increase for males and females (see Figure 2 below).

Figure 2: Employment Insurance recipients (excluding special benefits such as parental and sick leave), by sex, City of Hamilton, 2004-2010. Source: Statistics Canada. Graph prepared by Sara Mayo, SPRC, 2011.

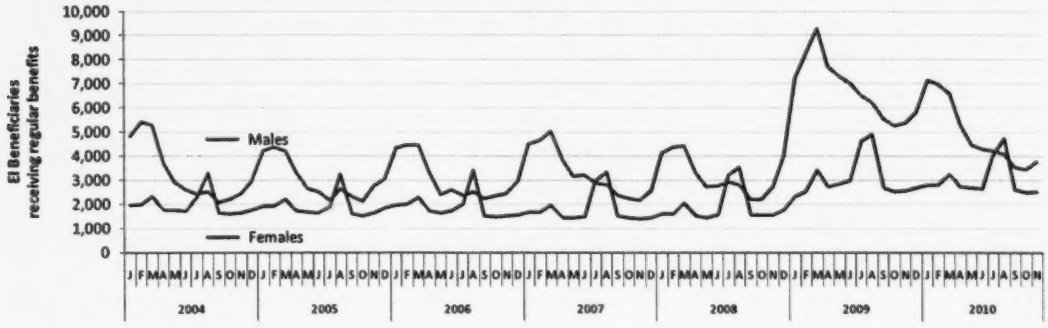
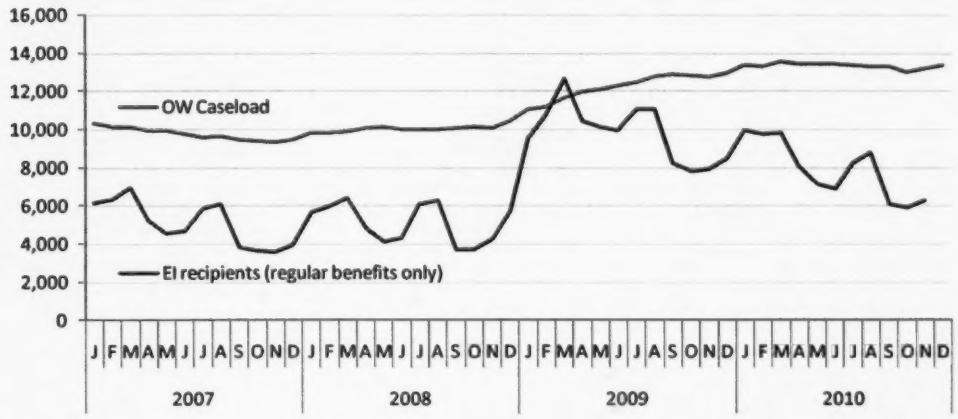


Figure 3: Ontario Works caseload and Employment Insurance beneficiaries, Hamilton, 2007-2010. Sources: Statistics Canada and City of Hamilton. Graph prepared by Sara Mayo, SPRC, 2011.



Comparing EI recipients with the Ontario Works (OW) caseload for Hamilton over the last four years (2007-2010), we see that the number of total EI recipients nearly doubled between December 2008 and March 2009 to 16,908, while OW caseloads have grown more gradually (Figure 3 above). While the decrease in EI recipients in 2010 seems promising, this may indicate that some recipients are exhausting the maximum period of benefits, have not yet found work, and are not yet eligible to apply for Ontario Works. Persons may not apply for Ontario Works after exhausting EI benefits until they also deplete any savings they may have.

Accordingly, there may be many people who are not currently receiving government financial assistance and are gradually using up their savings as they search for employment.

4.3 Employment Services in Hamilton

Another aspect of the context around HJAC is the employment services system. Over the last several months, the employment services system in Hamilton has been reorganized to form the Employment Ontario network. The network in Hamilton originally consisted of seven (7) main employment service providers: VPI, Mohawk College, Employment Hamilton, YMCA, Goodwill-Amity, Wesley Urban

Ministries, and Settlement and Integration Services Ontario (SISO). Because of recent legal and financial difficulties, SISO has closed its doors, laying off roughly 150 workers, and leaving the Employment Ontario network in Hamilton with six (6) main employment service providers. At each of the remaining six employment service provider agencies, clients can now receive the same full suite of client-focused employment services. Other agencies also offer employment services, though not the full suite, to particular communities. These agencies include ACFO, PATH, the Hamilton Public Library (5 locations), and the City of Hamilton Career Development.

4.4 Action Centres in Hamilton

In addition to these mainstream employment services, Hamilton has had a number of action centres over several years. As discussed earlier, action centres are launched in response to significant layoffs of 50 workers or more from a given workplace at one time where there is an interest to participate in the adjustment process. Since January 2010, Hamilton has had at least six action centres active. They are as follows:

1) Hamilton Area Steelworkers Action Centre: serving laid off steelworkers from several work sites including National Steel Car, U.S. Steel, Amcan, Associated Springs, Hamilton Speciality Bar, and many others.
2) Voith Action Centre: serving Voith Manufacturing.
3) Dover Industries Burlington: serving Dover Cone workers from Hamilton.
4) Canadian Auto Workers (CAW) Local 504: serving workers from a number of CAW 504 worksites such as Samuel, Selkirk, Wabco, Camco & Wescan.
5) Hamilton Job Action Centre: serving smaller layoffs in Hamilton.
6) Maple Leaf: serving Maple Leaf foods workers.

With the closure of some of these action centres such as Voith and Dover Cone, and the new employment service network not yet established, remaining unadjusted workers were referred to HJAC for services if desired. Active action centres in the area are encouraged to work together and provide assistance to each other as needed.

5.0 ORIGINAL SURVEY FINDINGS

This chapter of the report outlines findings from the original survey of individuals who were enrolled in longer-term employment related education or training programs. SPRC staff launched a survey of dislocated workers who were enrolled in further education or retraining (such as Ontario's Second Career or HRSDC's Skills Development). The survey looked at workers' experience in full-time educational settings and various challenges they faced. In total, 40 respondents completed the original survey (Appendix A). Based on findings from this survey, the rest of this chapter discusses the profiles of respondents, types of training, and experiences of these training programs in separate sections.

5.1 Profile of Respondents

Respondents were asked to identify the age group of which they were a part. Table 3 illustrates the percentages represented in each age group. Respondents fell roughly evenly into each age group between 25 and 64, with each age range capturing between 21 and 29% of all respondents. Slightly over half of respondents (56%) were 44 years of age or less, while 45% of respondents were age 45 or older.

Table 3: Age Range of Respondents of Original Survey

Age Range (years)	Percentage of Respondents
18-24	3%
25-34	24%
35-44	29%
45-54	24%
55-64	21%
65+	0%

Nearly two thirds of respondents were female (63%), while 37% were male. In terms of highest level of education completed, fully 70% of respondents had completed at least some college or university training (see Table 4 below). Of these, 38% had graduated college or university prior to beginning retraining. Of the eight percent (8%) of respondents who listed 'Other' under highest level of education, most were certificates acquired through community or career colleges.

Table 4: Highest Levels of Education of Respondents of Original Survey

Highest Level of Education	Percentage of Survey Respondents
No secondary school diploma	3%
Secondary school diploma	19%
Some college or university	32%
Graduated college or university	38%
Other	8%

Clients also identified how long they had been unemployed before they began their retraining program. Percentages of respondents in each length of unemployment period are shown in Table 5 below.

Table 5: Percentage of Respondents by Length of Unemployment

Length of Unemployment	Percent of Respondents
0-3 Months	8%
3-6 Months	31%
6-12 Months	36%
1-2 Years	18%
2-3 Years	5%
3+ Years	3%

Respondents came from a range of backgrounds including manufacturing, transportation, finance, and administration. Of all respondents, 85% were laid off from their last employment position, while 13% were not.

5.2 Types of Training

The specific types of training taken by respondents were as diverse as their former careers, and included massage therapy, funeral services, police foundations, accounting, and biotechnology. Most respondents received government financial assistance through Ontario's Second Career Program (80%), while 13% of respondents received support through HRSDC's Skills Development Program. (The remaining 7% received support from other programs.)

Training programs were provided through a community college for 45% of respondents, through a career college for 40% of respondents, and through a training school for 13% of respondents. Almost three quarters of respondents (72%) were pursuing training as part of a new career path, while 28% were taking training related to their previous work experience. Among those starting a new career path, some individuals were pursuing completely new paths, and others were building on skills they carried from their previous profession. For example, one respondent explained that her program in medical terminology will build on her skills in office administration and allow her to access administration jobs in the medical field.

5.3 Experiences of Training Programs

Respondents were then asked a series of questions about their experiences with retraining. When asked to rate the level of difficulty of the program in terms of academic requirements, on a scale from 1 to 4, with 1 being "Very Easy" and 4 being "Very Difficult," most respondents rated it at a 3 or 4 level of difficulty (see Table 6 below).

Table 6: Percentage of Respondents by Level of Difficulty of Longer Term Retraining Programs

Level of Difficulty	Percentage of Respondents
1 "Very Easy"	3%
2 "Somewhat Easy"	30%
3 "Somewhat Difficult"	53%
4 "Very Difficult"	15%

The survey then asked what the most challenging part of the program was for respondents. While individuals often identified academic challenges specific to their course of study, memorization or the challenge of memorizing large amounts of information was a common theme that emerged from responses. Respondents also often cited the challenge of finding time to study while balancing school and family responsibilities.

When asked how their lives had changed since enrolling in their training program, respondents identified both positive life changes and negative ones. In terms of positives, respondents described having a renewed sense of confidence and hope as a result of their studies. Some respondents explained that they felt that they had matured as a result of the learning process; felt more focused, and had goals for the future. On the negative side, a number of respondents recounted struggling with a change in routine and with finding time to study. Many described stressful circumstances, including stress on families. Respondents were then asked about challenges in general and in specific they faced since beginning their training program. While respondents described a range of challenges, the primary themes that emerged from responses involved the stress around balancing school and family responsibilities and time management in general.

5.3.1 Financial Challenges

In terms of specific challenges, 53% of respondents reported that they had faced financial challenges of some kind. Respondents described circumstances related to living on significantly reduced incomes. Some individuals found themselves in circumstances where they had to make difficult decisions like remortgaging their house in order to pay the bills. Respondents also noted that many of the costs associated with their education were not covered through their training program, such as registration fees, exam fees and transportation.

Respondents were also asked what would have helped them, and what could be improved to better support them in these challenges. While respondents were grateful for the funding provided and the opportunity to return to school, many felt that the living allowance needed to better reflect the actual cost of living. Many respondents also felt that support programs should be extended to cover additional costs such as transportation and other education related fees. Respondents also felt that medical and dental benefits should be provided as part of the program.

5.3.2 Childcare Challenges

Ten percent (10%) of respondents reported facing challenges related to childcare. Respondents described a range of difficult childcare arrangements resulting in day-to-day stresses. One woman described having to leave school at noon every day to transport her two children from one childcare provider to another before returning to school for the afternoon.
In terms of solutions or supports, the majority of responses called for better access to child care in their community.

5.3.3 Social, Recreation, and Leisure Challenges

Most respondents (53%) reported experiencing challenges related to social activities, recreation, or leisure. Almost all responses to this question revolved around constrained time and money. In many cases individuals simply did not have the time for social or recreational activities given their heavy course loads. Where time was not the main factor, respondents explained that they had no money available for recreation or leisure activities.

In terms of addressing time constraints, respondents suggested limiting workloads or extending the program to spread the work out over a longer period. While participants were generally grateful for the funding they were receiving, many recommended an increase in the living allowance portion of the funding. Most people did expect a drastic change in lifestyle.

5.3.4 Family Challenges

Nearly 40 percent of respondents (38%) reported experiencing family challenges as a result of undertaking their training program. While some respondents described their personal circumstances, the main themes related to family challenges were 1) having very little time to spend with family, and 2) the financial stress that comes with a reduced household income.

In terms of strategies to address family challenges, respondents most often suggested more manageable (less concentrated) school schedules.

5.3.5 Health Challenges

A significant portion of respondents (44%) had faced health challenges. Individuals described a wide range of acute and chronic health issues. In several cases, these health challenges interfered with respondents' ability to focus on or complete coursework.

In terms of addressing health challenges, respondents most often suggested providing health and dental benefits to participants of training programs.

5.4 Confidence in Finding Employment

Respondents were also asked to rate their level of confidence that the training they were undertaking would result in full-time employment on a scale from 1 to 4, 1 being "No Confidence" and 4 being "Very Confident." The percentage of respondents with each level of confidence is shown in Table 7 below. More than two thirds of respondents (69%) reported a 3 or 4 level of confidence. Including the level 2 scores, which indicate at least some confidence, 90% of respondent reported having some confidence that the training they were engaged in would lead to full-time employment. This suggests that, from the perspective of those enrolled in these programs, longer term employment focused training is valuable.

Table 7: Levels of confidence that training will result in full-time employment

Level of Confidence	Percentage of Respondents
1	10%
2	21%
3	28%
4	41%

The survey also asked respondents to explain why they chose a particular confidence rating. For those at the lower end of the confidence scale, reasons most often related to their age (in the cases of older workers), or their perception that that the economy has not yet recovered.

On the positive end of the scale, many respondents explained that they had gained increased confidence in themselves as a result of their enrolment in training. Again, this suggests that completing this training is valuable in terms of boosting confidence that can in turn improve employment outcomes. Many also felt that they had done significant research prior to enrolling in their training program and that there were many opportunities available in their chosen field.

6.0 BROAD-BASED SURVEY FINDINGS

Surveys were conducted with HJAC clients who had completed between 1 and 8 training courses. This section gives a summary of findings from the survey phase of research.

6.1 Profile of Respondents

Telephone surveys were conducted with 154 HJAC clients. To get a better sense of who accesses HJAC's services and supports, a basic profile of respondents was generated from a combination of information collected from resumes and client files, as well as questions asked directly of clients in surveys.

Nearly 70% of respondents were male (69%), while 31% of respondents were female. Clients were asked if they would identify the age group of which they were a part. Table 8 illustrates the percentages represented in each age group. The vast majority of clients are at least 35 years of age or more (78%). Further, half of clients surveyed are 45 years of age or more, and are considered 'older workers' according to the literature (See Chapter 3).

Table 8: Percentage of Respondents by Age Range

Age Range (years)	Percentage of Respondents
18-24	5%
25-34	17%
35-44	29%
45-54	35%
55-64	14%
65+	1%

Table 9 shows the distribution of the highest level of education achieved by respondents. In terms of education, the largest group represented is clients with a high school diploma (36%). Nearly a quarter of respondents (23%) do not have a high school diploma and nearly another quarter (23%) completed some college or university. One out of ten respondents (10%) graduated college or university, and just 8% of respondents completed trade school.

Table 9: Percentage of Client Survey Respondents by Highest Level of Education Achieved

Highest Level of Education	Percentage of Survey Respondents
No secondary school diploma	23%
Secondary school diploma	36%
Some college or university	23%
Graduated college or university	10%
Trade school	8%

Combining these two dimensions (age and education), it is possible to see how different age groups are distributed across levels of education. Table 10 below shows the number of survey respondents in each age group and level of education. The age groups that make up the greatest portion of each level of education are indicated in bold, with the percentage of the total number of respondents with that level of education represented by that age group in brackets.

Table 10: Respondents' Age by Education level (largest proportion of one age group in each level of education in bold)

Level of education	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55=64	65+
No secondary	3	2	8	**16**	5	1
Secondary	3	10	14	**20**	5	0
Some college or university	0	9	**10**	9	6	0
Graduated college or university	1	3	4	**5**	2	0
Trade school	0	1	**7**	2	2	0

The length of time that clients had been unemployed before coming to HJAC was calculated from the date of last employment on a client's resume and the date of first contact with HJAC as noted in client files. Half of respondents had been unemployment for three months or less as of November, 2010, as seen in Table 11 below. The majority of respondents had been unemployed for one year or less (79%). Still, another 15% of respondents had been unemployed for between 1 and 2 years, and the remaining 6% had been unemployed for 2 years or more.

Table 11: Length of Unemployment before Contact with HJAC

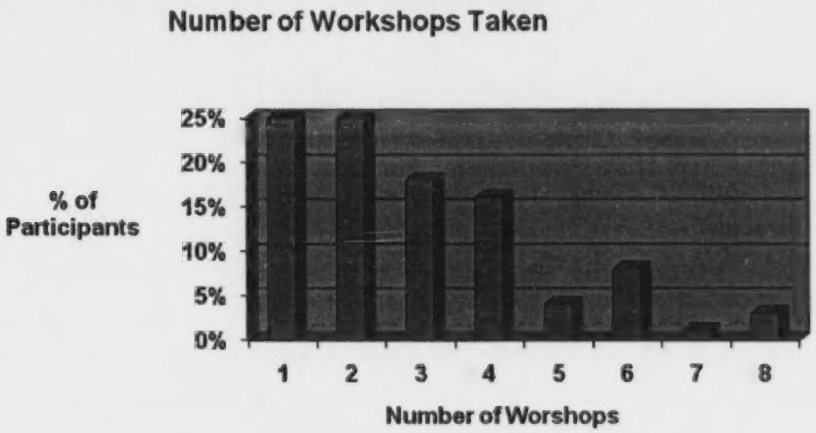
Length of Unemployment	Percent of Respondents
0-3 Months	50%
3-6 Months	9%
6-12 Months	20%
1-2 Years	15%
2-3 Years	3%
3+ Years	3%

Because the target client group of HJAC includes those who have experienced a recent layoff or shutdown within the agreement period, it appears that some of those surveyed may not have been eligible to receive supports from HJAC. This suggests that HJAC clients can benefit from an open door policy, where individuals who are not eligible are referred to other local agencies.

6.2 Workshops and Employment Outcomes

Of the 652 clients who came to HJAC for support, only 270 – or 41% - took training courses. The fact that 59% of those who came to HJAC for employment help did not take training suggests that clients completed training to suit their employment goals, rather than simply taking advantage of free training. Because one purpose of this research was to assess the value of training for dislocated workers, this section describes the amount and types of training taken by clients and how these are correlated with clients' employment outcomes. Figure 4 below shows the proportion of clients who took each number of workshops.

Figure 4: Number of workshops taken by percentage of respondents



Grouping respondents into those who took between 1 and 4 workshops and between 5 and 8 workshops, we see that 84% of respondents took only 1-4 workshops. This suggests that free training encourages people to engage in employment related activities.

The survey also asked clients about their experiences with employment since first coming to HJAC. This data was then connected to the number of workshops taken by clients, as shown in Table 12 below.

Table 12: Employment Outcomes by Number of Workshops Taken

Number of Workshops	Employment since first contact	No employment since first contact	Positive employment outcome
1	19	19	50%
2	20	18	53%
3	20	8	71%
4	17	7	71%
5	3	3	50%
6	7	5	54%
7	2	0	100%
8	4	0	100%
TOTAL	92	60	61%

When clients are grouped by number of workshops taken, we see 50% positive employment outcomes for clients who took 1 workshop, 63% positive employment outcomes for clients who took 2 to 4 workshops, and 67% positive employment outcomes for clients who took 5 to 8 workshops. Overall, 92 clients surveyed (61%) had positive employment outcomes.

There is a general trend that clients who took more workshops tended to have better employment outcomes. It is important to note that this does not necessarily mean that taking more workshops caused better employment outcomes. The impact of workshops on employment outcomes is explored further below.

In order to flesh out and explore further the relationship between training and employment outcomes, clients were asked the following question: "Do you feel that completing the workshop on ___ was/will be helpful in finding work? Why/why not?"

While this question was asked in relation to specific workshops, responses were quite similar regardless of the workshop focus. As the main theme, respondents valued having recent training on their resume. While this clearly helped to build the confidence of HJAC clients, they also felt it was valued by potential employers as it demonstrated current activity in the labour market during a period of unemployment. In the words of one client, "Having a certificate helps because the employer sees you took the time to educate yourself on that." In this way, completing these courses is valuable in securing employment because recent credentials convey to employers that a candidate is active in the labour market, and may be more likely to be an active worker.

Two workshops in particular were valued as useful skills in any workplace: First Aid and WHMIS. Because health and safety concerns can arise in all workplaces, these workshops were seen as being transferable to various jobs, and offering clients an advantage in the job market by being able to demonstrate these skills. As one client put it, "I am working night shift; the company likes knowing that they have someone with First Aid on that shift." These workshops then are valuable in a range of employment situations and can improve candidates' chances of securing jobs in various sectors.

Workshops focusing on a specific skill set were seen as valuable upgrades or as providing opportunities to compete for positions in a new field. For one client, "Because I have a certificate for forklift I can start applying for forklift jobs." In some cases clients took training in order to re-certify for skills or experiences they already had. Most clients felt it was valuable to have certificates for these skills as a way to represent them to potential employers or validate previous experience that may have been undocumented. Several clients also valued specific skill set certificates as making them eligible for promotions to other positions in the future.

Positive employment outcomes are defined as clients having had some paid employment since first coming to HJAC. Not all clients were employed at the time of survey, however. Overall, 61% of respondents have had some paid employment since first coming to HJAC, while 39% have had no paid employment in that time (see Table 12, previous page). At the time of completing the survey, 41% of clients were currently employed, while 59% were not currently employed. While clients' current employment situations change constantly, we can still compare the fact that 50% of all HJAC clients over time have found work to the 61% of survey respondents who have had work since coming to the centre. While these populations are different, these figures suggest that completing training courses contributes to positive employment outcomes. Further research would be needed to determine this for certain.

Clients reported having had a wide range in the types of jobs (full-time, part-time, temporary, casual, or contract). Jobs were considered 'precarious' if they were temporary[4], contract, or casual because in general these types of work tend to offer less stability in terms of length of employment, unpredictable hours, lack of benefits, and/or lower wages. The percentages of different types of work arrangements are shown in Table 13 below. Fortunately, just over 30% of employment attained by clients was full time, while 18% was part time work. Of greater concern is that over half (53%) of all employment clients engaged in was precarious.

Table 13: Type of employment by percentage of total jobs held by respondents

Type of Position	Number of Jobs	Percentage of Jobs
Full time	32	31%
Part time	18	18%
Precarious	53	53%
Total Jobs: 103		

For each workshop, clients were asked to rate whether they thought the workshop "was or will be helpful in finding work" from 1 to 4, with 1 being "not helpful at all" and 4 being "very helpful". Table 14 below

[4] Temporary jobs are often called 'temp' jobs, and temporary employment agencies are commonly called 'temp agencies.' Both 'temp' and 'temporary' are used interchangeably throughout this report.

shows the percentage of respondents that rated each workshop as 3 or 4 on this scale. Each course had been taken by between 15 and 87 respondents. The percentage of respondents who thought the workshop was or will be valuable ranged from 73% (Job Workshop) and 100% (Computer).
The five workshops that over 90% of respondents ranked as helpful or very helpful were: Computer (100%), First Aid (98%), Forklift (96%), W.H.M.I.S. (95%), and Safe food handling (93%). As in the original survey, these findings suggest that the vast majority of clients who completed training value the training because they feel it has improved or will improve their ability to find work.

Table 14: Client-Perceived Value of Employment Related Workshops

Workshop	# of Participants Surveyed	Value of Workshop in Finding Work – "Helpful" or "Very Helpful"
First Aid	87	98%
Interview Skills	10	89%
Job Workshop	15	73%
Forklift	78	96%
Fall Protection	20	84%
Smart Serve	20	83%
Overhead Crane	22	81%
Transportation of Dangerous Goods	50	85%
W.H.M.I.S.	75	95%
Safe food handling	34	93%
Computer	19	100%

6.3 Other Benefits, Services and Programs

Several other questions focused on what besides employment related workshops clients found useful about HJAC, what could be done to improve services and workshops at HJAC, and about client experiences (if any) with Second Career. Findings from these questions are described below.
Clients were asked, "Other than employment related workshops, what did you find useful about HJAC in terms of helping people find work?"

The majority of responses related to the quality of staffing at the centre. Specifically, respondents described staff as being "friendly", "caring", "flexible", "easy to talk to" and "motivating". Staff was perceived as having created a welcoming environment where the employment needs of clients were top priority.

Beyond the staff and general culture of the organization, respondents identified the value of some of the instrumental supports provided through the centre, including the job board, access to email, fax and computers. Respondents also valued the one-on-one support in creating and updating their resumes in preparation for job search highly.

Respondents were also asked what other types of employment workshops would be helpful in finding work. The most common responses to this survey question included more advanced or specialized computer courses, courses related to the operation of various types of heavy equipment, as well as specialized drivers licenses. Persons with an Ontario Class DZ license for example, are licensed to drive vehicles such as transport trucks, dump trucks, cement trucks, garbage trucks and rescue and fire trucks with airbrakes.

Clearly, any recommendations related the addition of new training programs would need to consider a review of the current labour market demands and required skill sets.

Clients were asked about what could be done to improve the services and supports offered at HJAC, focusing specifically on helping clients find employment. An overwhelming majority of respondents felt that the centre provided all the supports that they needed and required no improvements.

One common theme or recommendation emerging from responses from HJAC clients related to the idea of building stronger connections between the HJAC and local employers. These connections could involve outreach activities, like a job finding club where staff proactively seek out employment opportunities based on the skill sets and interests of clients. Alternatively, as one respondent suggested, the centre could operate like a temp agency where employers approach the centre directly with their HR needs. Several clients saw this possibility as being able to benefit clients differently than temporary employment. As one respondent said, in this model HJAC could "set up interviews with HR people, kind of like what temp agencies do now but would be more beneficial to people than agencies."

In terms of the Second Career program, only 32% of respondents had applied, while 68% had not. Among those who did apply to Second Career, a range of scenarios were experienced. A small number of respondents had successfully completed the application process and were waiting to begin training in their chosen field, while a small group of others had gone through the application process and were waiting for a final decision. The majority of respondents however either applied but did not qualify for one reason or another, or did not complete their application due to frustration with the process and wait times. Among those who did not apply for Second Career, the main reasons were that they were simply not aware of the program or they knew before applying that they did not qualify. Others pointed to a daunting application process or that the program was "not for them," citing issues of age or uncertain career path.

6.4 Key Findings from Client Surveys

The following points reflect the key findings from the survey phase of the research process. In this phase 154 HJAC clients were surveyed by telephone.

- There is diversity in the client population in terms of different levels of education. Half of clients are 'older workers' (45 years of age or more). This suggests a need for diversity of employment service approaches.
- Most clients (84%) took a maximum of 4 courses. This suggests that free training encourages people to engage in employment related activities.
- Of the 652 clients who came to HJAC for support, only 270 (41%) took training courses. This suggests that clients completed training to suit their employment goals, rather than simply taking advantage of free training.
- Completing more workshops was associated with better employment outcomes. Also, most clients rated workshops as helpful in finding work both in terms of numbered scores and open-ended questions. This suggests that the short-term employment related workshops offered at HJAC are valuable to clients in terms of improving their employment outcomes.
- One of HJAC's greatest strengths is its peer helper staff members, who were seen as helpful, supportive and motivating. This suggests that employment services and supports offered by people who are not necessarily from the same former workplace but have shared experiences of a layoff or shutdown provides a unique benefit to clients.

7.0 CLIENT INTERVIEW FINDINGS

Client interviews focused on three aspects of the client's experience, including experience with job search, their perceived value of the qualifications gained through completing employment related workshops through HJAC and their general experience with and value of the HJAC. In total, 15 clients were interviewed.

7.1 General experience with job search

Respondents reflected on job search experiences lasting from 3 months to 4 years. Respondents identified a number of sources of job leads, including the HJAC job board, Service Canada's job bank, newspapers, on-line employment related websites, personal networks and word-of-mouth. Temporary employment (temp) agencies were also identified as a significant source of job leads; however some respondents felt that agencies were not always honest about job opportunities. One client felt that "they [temp agencies] just want to get you in there to fill out your resume and all that crap and there is usually never jobs for you anyway." Because temp agencies charge fees in order for clients to be eligible for jobs through the agency, this respondent felt that clients were being exploited and that the possible benefit from registering with a temp agency was not worth it.

> "They just want to get you in there to fill out your resume and all that crap and there is usually never jobs for you anyway"
>
> -HJAC Client

While most respondents described an abundance of jobs to apply for, many were not getting called for interviews. Respondents cited limited qualifications, experience and age (for many older workers) as possible reasons for not getting interviews. In terms of available jobs, respondents identified a range including full-time, part-time, contract, and temporary positions. Overall, temporary positions seemed to be more common in the job market.

7.2 Perspectives on Temporary Work

While a small number of respondents saw some value in temporary (temp) work, the majority of respondents felt some degree of resentment about this labour market trend. The benefits and drawbacks of temp work in the views of respondents are discussed below.

7.2.1 Benefits of Temporary Work

One benefit of temp work for employers is that it allows an employer to evaluate whether or not a worker is a "good employee" before hiring on a more permanent basis. One respondent saw the availability of more temporary work as an indicator of more full time work as well, saying "I just honestly believe that when there's more temp work, there's more work out there." Temporary work can also be a good fit for people not looking for full-time employment for reasons such as family commitments or school attendance, for example. Finally, one respondent felt that temporary work can give an individual the chance to "test out" a particular job before committing to it. This view seems to assume that moving from temporary work to a full-time position is a real option; while such a move does happen, the experiences shared with the researchers by respondents suggest that it is extremely rare, discussed further below.

> "I just honestly believe that when there's more temp work, there's more work out there"
>
> -HJAC Client

7.2.2 Drawbacks of Temporary Work

While some respondents saw advantages in temp work, most had negative experiences and views of this form of employment. Respondents echoed the common concerns around temp work and precarious employment generally – low pay, no benefits, and no job security. Respondents also talked about the impacts of temporary work on their quality of life, feelings of fairness, health, and difficulties transitioning to full-time work.

Temporary work employees are often called in for work with little notice, which can impact employees' quality of life. One respondent resented having to wait by the phone all evening to hear if s/he would have work, saying "I don't want to be called at 11pm at night and say oh, you have to be there at 7am."

> "You get the one guy beside you making $18 an hour and you're getting $11...and they're getting benefits and you're not for the exact same work"
>
> -HJAC Client

Several respondents also raised feelings of frustration from the unfairness of doing temporary work alongside permanent workers with different working conditions. In the words of one respondent, "You get the one guy beside you making $18 an hour and you're getting $11...and they're getting benefits and you're not for the exact same work". Related to differences in status among workers on a site, a number of respondents recounted feeling 'looked down upon' in their workplaces, and of feeling that they had no rights.

As a form of precarious work, temporary work has been associated with worse health outcomes than for workers with more stable employment arrangements (see Chapter 3, Literature Review). This issue was raised by one participant who spoke about temp work and his health, citing serious dental concerns that, with no benefits and inadequate income, he has not been able to address.

In contrast with the respondent quoted above, some respondents had experienced what they felt were deliberate blocks to getting full-time employment from a temporary position. Two participants spoke of temp agencies using loopholes to undermine their ability to secure full-time employment. As one respondent put it,

> *[I was told] I had to work 6 months to get full time employment. Well, 5 months and 2 weeks [into it], before my probationary period was done with the company they had transferred me down to Mac to work one week down there with their plant manager's office, just general maintenance there, and they transferred me back to ED Smith [the first site] the week afterwards and I had to start all over again from Day 1.*

Overall, several respondents voiced serious criticisms of temp agencies, arguing that temp agencies exploit workers, make getting full-time jobs more difficult, and should be eliminated. The following three quotations illustrate these sentiments:

> "You know what? These temp agencies have to go – that's why we can't get full time jobs."
>
> -HJAC Client

"You know what? These temp agencies have to go – that's why we can't get full time jobs."
"They're hurting the economy because they're breaking jobs down is what they're doing."
"They're a way to exploit people when they need money and work, and they [temp agencies] can give them [workers] bare minimum."

7.3 The Value of Credentials Earned Through HJAC

Client respondents were also asked about their perceptions of the value of credentials earned through HJAC. The majority of respondents felt that they had either learned new skills or updated/recertified existing skills. For example, two respondents each had more than 20 years of experience driving forklift, but no certificate or license. Training through HJAC helped to validate their experience; as one respondent described it, "I've driven fork lift all my life but I never had a piece of paper that said that – but now I do."

Updating commonly required certificates like First Aid was also seen as a valuable addition to clients' resumes. As one client said, "Mostly [I] updated and recertified for stuff I had already, but I didn't have the certificates and it was really important to have those." Although clients like this are certifying skills they already have rather than gaining skills, there was still the perception that obtaining these certificates was valuable in terms of helping them to find work.

> "Mostly [I] updated and recertified for stuff I had already, but I didn't have the certificates and it was really important to have those."
>
> -HJAC Client

7.3.1. The Value of a Diversity of Training

Some clients completed courses in a variety of skills, from Smart Serve to Forklift. All of the HJAC clients interviewed felt that their training qualified them for a wider range of jobs. One respondent who was looking for work in security recounted "The company I've been talking to I told them [about all the certificates I have] forklift, etc., and asked if it could be useful and she said 'a lot of our sites are on industrial places – you never know.' It's better to have it than not to have it". There was a general perception from some respondents that the more 'tickets' or qualifications that you have the more marketable you are. In this view, having a greater number of credentials would increase a client's ability to find work, and this finding is supported by the broad-based survey findings (See Chapter 6). This suggests that people are changing the ways that they adjust to the changing labour market: as many jobs become less stable and precarious work grows, many workers are adapting by becoming qualified for jobs in a number of fields.

> "It gives you training that the employer doesn't have to spend time on."
>
> -HJAC Client

7.3.2 The Value of Certificates Earned Through HJAC

Clients were asked if they felt the certificates they earned through HJAC were valued by employers. Respondents were generally positive about having completed training courses and valued them as relevant and important qualifications to have.

For some respondents, HJAC training represented the bulk of their resume entries because, as one respondent related "without them as far as stuff that employers are looking for my resume was empty." While some respondents were not sure how the qualifications gained through HJAC were viewed by employers, most felt that they were valued. Some respondents pointed to the fact that they were getting interviews based on their resumes, while others had direct feedback from employers. For one respondent, the training completed at HJAC was a credential required for the job s/he currently holds: "I took the safe food handling course and when I applied for the job ... one of the first questions they asked me was do I have my safe food handling and I said that I did have it."

> "Without them as far as stuff that employers are looking for my resume was empty."
>
> -HJAC Client

Many respondents felt that even if specific courses were not relevant to the job in question, employers valued the fact that they had taken the initiative to learn a new skill and were willing and able to learn. Respondents also felt that employers valued recent qualifications especially because they demonstrated current activity in the labour market even if an individual was in a period of unemployment.

The majority of respondents either felt that the qualifications earned through HJAC either helped them secure their current job or were confident that the qualifications would help them secure work in the future. Clients completing training before securing a position was seen as an advantage for employers because, as one respondent explained, "it gives you training that the employer doesn't have to spend time on." Additionally, many respondents directly use skills gained through HJAC training in their current work. Reflecting on the courses taken, one respondent said "I actually use [the training], where I am working now my First Aid is on record and basically my Forklift license is used there".

7.4 Perceived Value of HJAC

Respondents were asked how and how often they used the centre. Some respondents indicated that they had not returned to HJAC since securing employment. In these cases, respondents described how and how often they used the centre when they were looking for work.

The frequency at which respondents used the centre ranged from 2-3 times per week to one every couple of weeks. Clients most often cited the job board and access to computers for job search as their main reason for regular visits, as well as access to a copier and fax machine. Participation in training courses was another motivation to visit the centre, as was support in developing and updating a resume. One respondent described his/her use of HJAC in this way: "You guys redid my resume. [I was] checking your board almost every other day, emailing applications, searching on-line too. I was coming in about every other day."
While all of the clients we spoke with seemed to value the culture or 'feel' of the centre, most felt that they did not use it as a social support (although see 'Value of the Peer Support Model' below.)

7.4.1 Experience with Other Employment Services

Overall, this client group had limited experience with other local employment services. Those who did however showed an appreciation for the welcoming and relaxed nature of the centre. As one respondent explained, "it's a relaxed atmosphere and you don't feel like you're centered out, or you don't feel like, 'oh, my god, this guy's smarter than I am.' Or 'this guy's gonna put me down if I say a wrong answer' or stuff like that". Some clients felt that staff at local employment agencies did not make clients feel comfortable, saying "Like when you go to a lot of those other government agencies...if they've never been laid off and all they see are people that are laid off, they don't treat you the same. I get the feeling that they think we're failures or something but it's not our fault that the economy went to crap".

"Like when you go to a lot of those other government agencies... if they've never been laid off and all they see are people that are laid off, they don't treat you the same. I get the feeling that they think we're failures or something but it's not our fault that the economy went to crap."

-HJAC Client

7.4.2 Value of the Peer Support Model

Although many of the clients interviewed said they did not use the centre as a social support, an overwhelming majority of respondents valued the peer support model highly. Primarily, they felt that they could relate well to the peer helpers at the centre because "they know what you are going through." Many of the comments from respondents suggest that they actually did derive some social support from their interaction with the HJAC. For example, one respondent said "just to have somebody to listen and you know, might have shared the same experience and might be able to give you advice or input, yeah that's a total benefit." Another respondent described the experience with HJAC this way, "I was out of work. Actually, I didn't think I would be out of work that long. But I did go down and speak with a few people there to get some support and that." Speaking with a peer helper was more comfortable for some respondents than speaking with professional employment counsellors. As one respondent put it, "I like it [speaking with peer helpers] better because it's not like a counsellor who's been taught, you know? This is somebody – 'hey, I know what you're going through.'" No respondents brought up any diminished benefit in working with peer helpers who had not previously worked in the same workplace as the respondent.

7.5 Key Findings from Client Interviews

- Respondents use a variety of sources to job search including the HJAC job board, Service Canada's job bank, newspapers, on-line employment related websites, personal networks and word-of-mouth.
- While most respondents described an abundance of jobs to apply for, many were not getting called for interviews.
- Overall, temporary positions seemed to be more common in the job market.
- Temporary work was valued by some respondents because of the flexibility it offers to workers and employers.
- Most respondents felt some degree of resentment about temporary work because of low pay, no benefits, and no job security. Temporary work also seen as impacting respondents' quality of life, feelings of fairness, health, and difficulties transitioning to full-time work.
- Most respondents felt that they had either learned new skills or recertified existing skills through workshops they completed at HJAC. Obtaining official certification of skills gained through work experience was viewed as important for gaining employment.
- Respondents with diverse training felt that it qualified them for a wider range of jobs and would help them find work.
- Respondents generally felt that the qualifications earned through HJAC either helped them secure their current job or that the qualifications would help them secure work in the future.
- All respondents appreciated the welcoming and relaxed nature of HJAC. Although many clients said they did not use the centre as a social support, an overwhelming majority of respondents valued the peer support model highly. Primarily, they felt that they could relate well to the peer helpers at the centre because "they know what you are going through."

8.0 STAFF INTERVIEW FINDINGS

Interviews were also conducted with HJAC staff, including the coordinator and peer helpers. Peer helpers were interviewed together in a focus group format. Findings from the focus group and coordinator interview have been combined here because of their similar points of view, and also to improve/ensure confidentiality[5]. In total, five (5) staff members were interviewed in person. These interviews focused on common challenges faced by clients, how these challenges could be overcome, temporary work, credentials, and how HJAC could better prepare and connect clients to employment. Together with findings from the client and employer interviews, these findings help to give a fuller picture of the changing nature of employment in Hamilton. The subsections below describe findings from staff interviews.

8.1 Main challenges facing clients

Staff members were asked about the main challenges that HJAC clients face in terms of finding employment. HJAC staff members see the four main challenges faced by their clients as being a lack of computer skills, age, education, and transportation.

One of the most important challenges that clients face discussed by staff members was a lack of computer skills. As one staff member put it, "[for] a lot of jobs you have to rely on computers - and finding jobs online too." This quotation points out how low levels of computer skills can disadvantage clients not only in terms of job requirements, but also in the range of job search tools they can access. A lack of computer skills is likely to be an increasingly significant barrier for job seekers as most workplaces rely more and more heavily on technology.

> "[For] a lot of jobs you have to rely on computers – and finding jobs online too."
>
> -HJAC Staff

Staff felt that many older clients, who make up roughly half of the total client population, face age-based discrimination because of employers' assumptions, such as about lack of physical ability. Although most resumes to do not include an applicant's age, as one staff member put it, "with the dates [on your resume] they'll figure out how old you are. Most people know that if you're in your 50s and you've been in manufacturing for 25 years, your knees, your elbows, your back – something's going to be out." Despite the fact that discrimination against job applicants based on age is illegal, these interviews suggest that such discrimination may be fairly common.

Another familiar challenge faced by HJAC clients, according to staff, is low levels of education. While lacking a high school diploma was often not a barrier to finding manufacturing or general labour employment thirty years ago, now with more applicants for each position, competition between applicants changes the value of educational credentials. In the words of one staff member, "They [employers] can be picky, so if you don't have your high school, your resume is going in that dumpster."

> "[Employers] can be picky, so if you don't have your high school, your resume is going in that dumpster."
>
> -HJAC Staff

Transportation is a fourth challenge that many HJAC clients encounter in their efforts to re-enter the labour market. If clients do not have access to a vehicle, they must rely on public transportation to do job searches and get to interviews, and this can be an unaffordable expense for some. In the experience of one staff member, "Clients [are] saying, 'Well, do you have bus tickets? 'Cause I can't get out there. I don't have the money for bus tickets today and the [social assistance] cheque doesn't come in until 2-3 days from now.'" In this way, transportation costs can directly constrain clients' ability to undertake successful job searches.

[5] For reasons of simplicity and confidentiality, this chapter uses "interviews" to refer to the coordinator interview and peer helper focus group together.

8.2 How to overcome challenges

Responding to such challenges, staff had two main suggestions related to education and transportation. In terms of education, staff felt that HJAC should provide support for clients in getting their high school equivalency diploma. One staff member saw it this way, "I think if some of them got their high school it might really help them. In some cases I'm not so sure. But not having your high school is a barrier for a lot of people."

Staff also suggested that having bus tickets available for clients' job search activities would help to remove the barrier of transportation costs.

8.3 Most common types of jobs over the past year

Staff members were asked about common job opportunities posted at HJAC over the past year, and also about the quality of those jobs in terms of wages, benefits, and security. The most common types of job opportunities posted at HJAC over the past year involved forklift, manufacturing, general labour, and cleaning. Overall, there seem to be more temporary jobs available. Staff also noted a rise in contract work, which could develop into full-time employment if the employer is willing to commit. According to one staff member, "I'm not seeing a lot of full time because everything is usually for three months. It's contract and if you last, great, if you don't..." This may suggest that contract work could have slightly better chances of leading to full-time employment than temporary work.

8.3.1 Quality of employment

Staff commented that the quality of employment opportunities they see at HJAC were generally poor in terms of wages and benefits. As one staff member put it, "very few of them are really good, safe, reliable jobs, but when you have no money to buy groceries, you will take them." This quotation highlights the fact that many clients have few other options but to take these poor quality jobs. Wages for most jobs posted at HJAC are very low, mostly at or slightly above minimum wage, and do not offer benefits. Echoing the comments above, another staff member noted that "most people take it because they have to, hoping that it's gonna be full time and benefits will come, but they need it."

> "Very few of them are really good, safe, reliable jobs, but when you have no money to buy groceries, you will take them."
>
> -HJAC Staff

8.4 How employers view HJAC certificates

When asked if employers value training that clients receive through the centre, staff members agreed that HJAC certificates were valued by employers. In the words of one staff member, the training offers employers an advantage: "[employers] can hire them already trained so they do feel that that's important and they do look for certifications – up to date ones." Again, the fact that these certificates are recent is of particular value.

Because some clients take a small number of courses geared to a specific industry and others take multiple courses in multiple industries, staff members were asked what some client motivations might be for taking these different approaches. For some clients, completing a training course represents a direct link to employment. A fairly common experience was recounted in this way, "they come in and say, 'I need this. I can get this job, but I need this.' And they get it and they get the job".

> "[Employers] can hire them already trained so they do feel that that's important and they do look for certifications – up to date ones."
>
> -HJAC Staff

There is also value in having multiple credentials, staff explained, saying "You wouldn't want to put it all on the same resume because it's too confusing. But we do have clients who have a manufacturing resume, and maybe a sales resume, and maybe a hospitality resume, and they would keep some information off of each resume". This makes clients more marketable and widens their scope of opportunities.

"We do have clients who have a manufacturing resume, and maybe a sales resume, and maybe a hospitality resume, and they would keep some information off of each resume".

-HJAC Staff

8.5 How HJAC could better prepare and connect people to employment

When asked how HJAC could better prepare and connect clients to employment, staff members echoed what clients have been saying to them (as reflected in client interviews). Many clients say that they want the centre to connect them with employers. This suggestion essentially amounts to the role of a temp agency, except that the centre would not be the employer or receive payment from employers. This suggestion does seem to fill a gap that exists in the experience of both clients and staff. Employment service providers often have established connections with employers as well, and so strengthening referral relationships with other agencies may be another way to connect people to employers.

8.6 Key Findings from Staff Interviews

This chapter summarizes findings from an interview with the HJAC coordinator and a focus group with four peer helpers (five staff members in total). Staff members were asked about common challenges faced by clients, how these challenges could be overcome, temporary work, credentials, and how HJAC could better prepare and connect clients to employment. Key findings from staff member interviews are as follows:

- HJAC staff members see the four main challenges faced by their clients as being a lack of computer skills, age, education, and transportation. Computer skills in particular are likely to be increasingly important for workers in the job market as workplaces rely more and more on technology.
- HJAC should support clients in obtaining their high school equivalency credentials in order to improve employment outcomes.
- Bus tickets could be made available to support clients in job searching in order to overcome some barriers to transportation.
- Job opportunities posted at HJAC over the past year commonly involved forklift, manufacturing, general labour, and cleaning.
- Temporary and contract jobs seem to be growing. Contract work may develop into full-time employment if the employer is willing to commit.
- Most employment opportunities at HJAC are of poor quality in terms of wages and benefits.
- Some clients take a small number of courses in order to fill specific job requirements, while others take a diverse range of courses. Staff noted that this makes clients more marketable and widens their scope of opportunities.
- Many clients tell staff that they want the centre to connect them with employers. This essentially amounts to the role of a temp agency, except that the centre would not be the employer or receive payment from employers.

9.0 EMPLOYER INTERVIEW FINDINGS

Building on findings from the survey and literature review phases, interviews were conducted with employers in Hamilton. In total, three representatives from temporary agencies and private companies in Hamilton were interviewed by telephone. From a research perspective, these interviews allow us to gain a better understanding of how changes in the labour market and the economy more broadly are viewed by employers. These interviews focused on the types of employment offered in the last year, impacts of temporary work, credentials and experience, and how HJAC could better prepare clients for employment. This allows us to compare findings with those from the survey and interviews with clients to create a fuller picture of the changing nature of employment in Hamilton. The subsections below describe findings from these interviews.

9.1 The Current Job Market

Respondents in this group were asked about the nature of positions they had hired for in the past year. According to the employers interviewed, after a slow down in hiring caused by the recession, recovery was characterized by an increase in temporary work. While there is a mix of positions available locally, temporary work seems to dominate the job market. One employer described a "casual to hire" process used in their company, where all new employees start as casual workers with the hope of becoming full-time employees of the company. This period of casual work can last from 6 months to 2 years.

9.2 Impact of Temporary Work

Employers were also asked how they saw temporary work impacting workers. There was a range of perspectives on temporary work, though most of the impacts of temporary work discussed were negative. While one respondent felt that workers were "happy" and "grateful" to have temp work, others felt that temp workers faced feelings of isolation and unfair treatment. Workers' sense of isolation and unfair treatment came up in all interviews. As one respondent explained, "Quite often they don't feel they're part of a company because they're through a temporary agency, so there's a sense of 'well, I'm not with that company, yet I'm working there". Discussing changes over time in the nature of the employment relationship, one employer articulated concerns about unfair treatment this way, "There's definitely a change. In the old days you would make a commitment to your employees-to-be a lot earlier than now. What we're doing to these young kids, we're dangling a job in front of them for up to 2 years, no benefits, no vacation and this is acceptable."

"There's definitely a change. In the old days you would make a commitment to your employees-to-be a lot earlier than now. What we're doing to these young kids, we're dangling a job in front of them for up to 2 years, no benefits, no vacation and this is acceptable."

-Employer

Employers reported that wages were another important aspect of the impacts of temporary work. According to employers, workers often express frustration and dissatisfaction with pay rates, which often start at $10.25 per hour, and without benefits. This rate is much lower than what many clients were making in their previous jobs, especially for older workers coming from the manufacturing industry. One employer viewed these changes simply as part of the reality of the current labour market, saying "Unfortunately a lot of these people need to start at the bottom to get back to where they are. That's unfortunate, but most of the jobs that we're seeing opening up are just minimum wage jobs".

"Unfortunately a lot of these people need to start at the bottom to get back to where they are. That's unfortunate, but most of the jobs that we're seeing opening up are just minimum wage jobs"

-Employer

9.3 Credentials and Experience

Respondents were asked about the importance of credentials and experience, both as stand-alone qualities and relative to one another. As one might expect, required qualifications vary by job, with specific qualifications required for more technical positions and fewer qualifications for general labourers. All respondents agreed that a high school diploma is a basic qualification required by most employers. There are some exceptions for older workers with extensive experience but by no means is this a guarantee. In the experience of one employer, a high school diploma was a key factor in whether workers moved from temporary to permanent positions. As s/he explained, "[in order] to go permanent they have to have their high school and we have a lot of applicants that don't. They could have all the requirements, all these certificates under the sun, but if they don't have that they don't qualify for permanent." Overall, workers require a mix or balance of credentials and experience. In the case of forklift training for example, an individual may have a certificate or license, but without the years of experience required by the employer the license may not be valued. This also works in reverse, where an individual may have 20 years of forklift experience but was never licensed.

"[In order] to go permanent they have to have their high school and we have a lot of applicants that don't. They could have all the requirements, all these certificates under the sun, but if they don't have that they don't qualify for permanent."

9.4 HJAC Role

Interviews with employers concluded by discussing how HJAC could better prepare and connect its clients to employment. As mentioned above, high school credentials were valued highly by employers. In order to strengthen clients' ability to secure full-time permanent employment, HJAC needs to ensure that clients are supported in completing their high school equivalency.

Another way suggested by employers that HJAC could improve support to clients was to work with clients to identify current skills, employment goals, gaps between the two and support actions to fill those gaps. With older clients coming from manufacturing, employers recommended that HJAC work with clients to help them understand the skills they have and the new skills required to re-enter the industry. It was also suggested that the HJAC focus on helping clients to better align their aspirations with their actual skills. Employers pointed to standardized tests as a way of achieving this. In the words of one employer, after such a test is done, "then it's a matter of saying – if that's what you really want to be, we've tested you and here's where you are, here's the gaps you need to close even to be eligible."

A third and final theme of recommendations from employers to HJAC was around developing relationships directly between employers and the centre. One employer suggested that their company should develop partnerships with agencies like HJAC as a means to filling positions. Contrasting the current hiring process with this proposed arrangement, the employer explained "We throw a posting out and hopefully the right person applies to fill the need, as opposed to maybe building a partnership with this type of agency and quickly saying, 'Look, here's what we're looking for. What do you have?'" This recommendation echoes responses from the client survey phase (see Chapter 6) suggesting that HJAC build stronger connections with employers.

It is worth noting that this model recommended by clients and employers is similar to the Canada Manpower model, which was discontinued nearly two decades ago. Under Canada Manpower, federally funded agencies connected unemployed individuals with jobs in the community at the request of local employers. The critical difference between this defunct program and present-day temporary agencies is that Canada Manpower did not take a portion of the wages paid by the employer as temporary agencies do.

9.5 Key Findings from Employer Interviews

In order to get a fuller picture of the changing labour market and how it impacts workers, three local employers were interviewed by telephone. The key findings from these interviews are as follows:

- The recent recession led to a slowdown in hiring, and recovery was characterized by an increase in temporary work.
- While there is a mix of positions available locally, temporary work seems to dominate the job market.
- One respondent felt that workers were "happy" and "grateful" to have temporary work, while others felt that temp workers faced feelings of isolation and unfair treatment.
- Wages and lack of benefits were further sources of frustration for workers, particularly in contrast with previous working conditions.
- Workers' progress from temporary work to full-time, permanent employment often takes between 6 months and 2 years, and is fairly rare.
- Most employers require employees to have a high school diploma either for initial hiring or to transition to full-time positions.
- Workers require a balance of credentials and experience.
- Clients' completion of high school equivalency should be supported in the community in order to improve employment outcomes.
- Services in the community should work with clients to identify current skills, employment goals, gaps between the two and support actions to fill those gaps.
- Organizations working with the unemployed/underemployed population, including employment services and action centres, should develop relationships directly with employers or strengthen relationships with each other in order to better connect clients to employers.

10.0 SERVICE PROVIDER FOCUS GROUP FINDINGS

Bringing together findings and insights from the earlier phases of research, the final phase brought several employment service providers and government representatives at all levels together at a meeting of the Skills Development Flagship. The focus group, which took place on January 27, 2011, explored the value of the type of training offered at HJAC, the best way to offer this training, and the potential role of HJAC, including whether or not it fills a gap in the community. The focus group portion of the meeting lasted just over an hour.

10.1 The Value of Training Offered at HJAC

Service providers were first asked if the type of short-term, specific training courses offered at HJAC are valuable, and in particular if this is the best way to get clients re-engaged with the labour market. There was consensus that the types of training offered at HJAC were valuable in reconnecting clients with the labour market. Some service providers emphasized that this training was of value as long as it is appropriate for the individual client. From this perspective, training should be targeted to each individual's work related goals.

The short-term nature of the workshops offered (2 days or less) was seen as especially beneficial by service providers. Half-day courses and courses at different times, including evenings or weekends, were also suggested as ways to make courses more easily accessible.

Training in specific, targeted skills was also valued highly, as this kind of training can add an easily understandable and applied skill to a client's resume. Computer skills and software and First Aid in particular were highlighted as being in high demand by clients.

10.2 The Best Ways to Offer Training

Participants were then asked how this training could best be offered in the community. While there were no suggestions on how to specifically offer the types of training courses offered at HJAC, there was a discussion about how the various service providers at the table could work together more effectively to reach clients who could benefit from this kind of training.

Several service providers suggested that the Skills Development Flagship could better mobilize as a network and coordinate their efforts. Improving communication, facilitating support, and holding networking sessions were all suggested as ways for the Flagship to be more responsive to the diverse employment support needs in the community. Specifically, networking and improved communication were seen as ways that service providers could share information about layoffs of 2-49 workers from one workplace and work with clients to reach dislocated workers who may not be aware of services available to them.

Another suggestion for how training could be organized more effectively was that Action Centres (such as HJAC) could work with the neighbourhood hubs. For example, if a company lays off workers who live in multiple hubs, having Action Centre or employment service representation at those tables could allow for training to be delivered where clients live. This was seen as another way to improve access to supports needed by potential clients.

10.3 Criticisms and Constraints

Throughout the discussion some criticisms of HJAC's service were raised. Two related concerns were confusion around who was eligible to access HJAC's services, and also what HJAC's relationship was to other employment agencies in the community.

As the community became aware of the workshops offered by HJAC, clients were referred from various agencies for the employment related workshops and would then return to their respective service

providers for continuing assistance. This resulted in increased client applications to take part in workshops, which represented a large demand on the centre and its resources. This indicated a shifting perception amongst clients that HJAC was a helpful resource as a training centre, which conflicts with the action centre model of providing a range of adjustment services, not only training.

MTCU expressed two related concerns about this situation: first, that HJAC was developing into a training centre and not a true action centre, and second, that clients accessing services at HJAC and local employment agencies were being counted by multiple organizations, all of which are funded by MTCU. MTCU then asserted the need to make clear distinctions between clients who were attributed to HJAC and clients who were attributed to other agencies. Clients who accessed services primarily at an employment service agency were then considered to be the clients of that agency, and were no longer eligible to receive training through HJAC unless that agency could provide payment. Although this created confusion around eligibility requirements for training from the various agencies, and frustrated some clients, it clarified who was considered an HJAC client and adjustment services for those clients. Most referrals to HJAC from other agencies then stopped, resulting in some frustration for clients and service providers although one community agency was still able to provide these workshops on a fee for service basis.

Some employment service providers at the focus group were concerned that at one point individuals could sign up to receive training without having that training connected to a specific employment plan. Because HJAC offers a wider range of short-term employment related workshops than many of the employment service providers, some participants in the service provider focus group felt that the funding for training could be allocated to established employment service providers in the community.

Participants in the focus group also voiced the concern that training clients for positions that are not widely available in the community may be setting clients up to fail if they hold unrealistic expectations. Beyond concerns related directly to training, some participants felt that client skills and attitudes also impact employment outcomes. One service provider described the experience of clients having received training but not always being able to recall the courses they have completed, especially if courses were taken several years earlier. While an on-line resource for laid off workers (www.lostmyjob.ca) was suggested as an additional tool, some service providers were concerned that older workers from the manufacturing industry may not have sufficient computer skills or knowledge to seek on-line support. With these challenges and constraints, participants emphasized the benefit of having support available to groups of dislocated workers, not only on an individual basis. A representative from the Provincial Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities noted that dislocated workers were free to go as a group to regular employment services.

10.4 The Potential Role of HJAC

Participants were then asked about the potential role of HJAC within the community, and whether or not the centre offers services that fill a gap.

10.4.1 The Value of HJAC

One participant described an experience where students were contacting employers in the community over the course of four days, and in the course of these calls students were told that four different employers were closing their businesses. From these four closures roughly 50 people were being dislocated in that short period of time, but because they did not all come from one employer, none of these groups of workers would be eligible for their own Action Centre. Using this example, the participant argued that these dislocated workers could have accessed services and supports at HJAC had they known about it. Further, the participant stated, "I would have to assume that that [layoffs in smaller numbers] is still going on in the community but not being captured." This echoes the experience of the researchers as well, having found it difficult to find groups of less than 50 laid off workers primarily because in many cases companies lay off 48 or 49 workers, which does not have to be reported to MTCU. Another participant reported encountering a client laid off with 20 other workers just before

Christmas who was looking for an action centre. HJAC staff does some outreach to try to connect with these smaller groups, but reaching eligible clients remains a challenge.

In this way, some participants viewed HJAC has having the potential to fill the important gap of dislocated workers in groups too small to have their own Action Centre. While Action Centres are typically viewed as a temporary measure to an urgent and short-term situation, in the words of one participant, "We keep having urgent needs... In terms of that being a temporary thing- the reality is that that is an ongoing situation, not a temporary situation in this community. We're always going to have those layoffs of those quantities of people."

Some participants felt that HJAC could play a role in offering employment services and supports in Hamilton. Because of the unique model it uses, HJAC was seen as having the ability to augment what is offered in the community from the 6 major employment service providers. One participant put it this way: "We've never had adjustment services for under 50 [workers]."

Another contribution that HJAC's model may be able to contribute to the landscape of employment services is the element of reaching and offering services to clients in groups, whether from the same former employer or industry in general. Most employment services are accessed on an individual basis; HJAC's outreach efforts are aimed at building connections with clients from the same workplace. For one participant,

> *"There's something to be said for group interaction where they come in together and deal with the group issue. They motivate each other, their esteem goes up. I know you can say when they go to the service providers that they can go to a group workshop, but they're still there as an individual, not as a cohesive group working together... [there is] not a lot of group stuff- that's a gap."*

10.4.2 Emotional and Peer Support

Related to workers accessing employment services as a group, another part of what makes HJAC unique is its use of the peer support model. Emotional support after job loss from peers was seen by many participants as especially valuable. Learning about what options and supports might be available in a peer support environment was also seen by some participants as valuable.

The researchers stressed that the peer helpers at HJAC were not necessarily from the same specific companies as clients (though certainly some are). This is a difference from the traditional peer support model. The model at HJAC is generic in the sense that peer helpers have experienced a layoff or shutdown, but maybe not from a specific company where clients formerly worked. Still, HJAC's peer helpers do share the experience of having worked for one employer for an extended period of time and also having been dislocated. In this way, peer helpers at HJAC create a culture of peer support more than a narrowly defined service.

Other ways to provide dislocated workers with employment supports and services were suggested as well. The website mentioned above (www.lostmyjob.ca) offers information and addresses some of the emotional aspects of job loss.[6] It is a local resource where people can learn where to go for counselling, housing, or other kinds of help.

Another participant pointed out that a lot of what employment counsellors do is motivating and helping clients through personal issues. This service provider's agency makes referrals in the community to other agencies or family doctors.

[6] This website is being rolled out across southwestern Ontario through June 2011.

10.5 Key Findings from Service Provider Focus Group

- Because of their short-term nature and specific skills focus, workshops offered at HJAC were seen as particularly valuable.
- Training should be targeted to each individual's work related goals.
- The Skills Development Flagship could better mobilize as a network in order to be more responsive to the diverse employment support needs in the community.
- Confusion and changing eligibility requirements to receive training at HJAC lead to frustration for clients and service providers referring clients to HJAC.
- Some service provider participants felt that funding for training could be distributed to established employment service providers to allow them to provide some of the workshops currently offered through HJAC.
- HJAC has the potential to fill the gap of serving dislocated workers in groups too small to have their own action centre. The culture of the centre offers an environment that some clients find more comfortable. In this way HJAC was seen as being able to augment what is offered in the community from the six major employment service providers.
- Peer helpers offer valuable emotional support after job loss, although HJAC's peer helpers are not always from the same companies as clients.
- Much of what employment counsellors do is motivating and helping clients through personal issues. Accordingly, peer support is not the only way to support dislocated workers through emotional challenges.

11.0 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Drawing on findings from the various research methods outlined in earlier chapters, this chapter highlights conclusions related to employment services for dislocated workers in Hamilton and makes recommendations to improve their relevance and effectiveness. For these recommendations, we draw primarily on the input gathered through the focus group with employment service providers in Hamilton.

11.1 Short-term employment related courses are useful

Conclusion

- The short-term employment related courses offered at HJAC are useful mostly because they enhance clients' confidence in their ability to find work. This research suggests that they contribute to improved employment outcomes. Still, training alone is not sufficient to get jobs. Training and credentials must be complemented by experience.

Recommendation

- These short-term employment related workshops should be available in the community.

Support

- *Completing more workshops was associated with better employment outcomes. Also, most clients rated workshops as helpful in finding work. This suggests that the employment related workshops offered at HJAC are valuable to clients in terms of improving their employment outcomes.*
- *Most respondents felt that they had either learned new skills or recertified existing skills. Obtaining official certification of skills gained through work experience was viewed as important for gaining employment.*
- *Because of their short-term nature and specific skills focus, workshops offered at HJAC were seen as particularly valuable, as they do not interfere greatly with job search or temporary employment activities.*
- *Training should be targeted to each individual's work related goals.*
- *Some clients take a small number of courses in order to fill specific job requirements, while others take a diverse range of courses. Staff noted that this makes clients more marketable and widens their scope of opportunities.*
- *Respondents with diverse training felt that it qualified them for a wider range of jobs and would help them find work.*
- *Respondents felt that the qualifications earned through HJAC either helped them secure their current job or that the qualifications would help them secure work in the future.*
- *Workers require a balance of credentials and experience.*

11.2 Peer support is key

Conclusion

- The peer support model is a key component of what is valuable at HJAC.

Recommendation

- Employment services in Hamilton should include opportunities for peer support.

Support

- *One of HJAC's greatest strengths is its peer helper staff members, who were seen as helpful, supportive and motivating. This suggests that supports offered by people who are not necessarily from the same former workplace but have shared experiences of a layoff or shutdown provides a unique benefit to clients.*
- *All respondents appreciated the welcoming and relaxed nature of HJAC. Although many clients said they did not use the centre as a social support, an overwhelming majority of respondents*

valued the peer support model highly. Primarily, they felt that they could relate well to the peer helpers at the centre because "they know what you are going through."

11.3 Connecting small groups to employment services is challenging

Conclusion

- Finding groups of 2-49 of laid off workers has proven difficult for HJAC. Part of this difficulty is due to a culture among some employers of not wanting to disclose information about upcoming layoffs. This eliminates an opportunity to inform workers about supports available to them as a group while they are relatively easy to contact because of being at one location (i.e. the workplace). At the same time, there are few places where groups of unemployed/underemployed workers can get services and/or support each other as a group.

Recommendation

- Employment services for smaller groups of dislocated workers should be made available in the community. The employment service community, including community agencies and government, should strengthen networks to identify and outreach to smaller groups of laid off workers. The Skills Development Flagship is a possible place to coordinate such collaboration. With or without this coordination, connecting with individuals laid off from a workplace and then connecting with their former co-workers can be an important method of reaching these groups.

Support:

- *The Skills Development Flagship could better mobilize as a network in order to be more responsive to the diverse employment support needs in the community.*
- *Finding groups of less under 50 workers laid off from one workplace has proved difficult. No official channels exist for connecting such groups to employment services as a group.*

11.4 Temp work is growing and impacts workers' wellbeing

Conclusion

- Temp work is increasingly common, and impacts many (though not all) workers negatively in terms of wages, benefits, stability, and health.

Recommendation

- All levels of government should consider the impacts of temp work in general - and temp agencies in specific - on workers in Hamilton. Governments should consider looking to other models of casual or labour force coordination, such as that used in the former Canada Manpower Office.

Support

- *The recent recession led to a slowdown in hiring, and recovery was characterized by an increase in temporary work.*
- *Most employment opportunities at HJAC are of poor quality in terms of wages and benefits.*
- *Temporary and contract jobs seem to be growing. Contract work may develop into full-time employment if the employer is willing to commit.*
- *Temp work impacts workers' standard of living and health, which contribute to higher health and social service costs, making this a public policy issue.*
- *Most respondents felt some degree of resentment about temporary work because of low pay, no benefits, and no job security. Temporary work also seen as impacting respondents' quality of life, feelings of fairness, health, and difficulties transitioning to full-time work.*
- *Wages and lack of benefits in particular were sources of frustration for workers, especially in contrast with previous working conditions.*

- *Workers' progress from temporary work to full-time, permanent employment often takes between 6 months and 2 years, and is fairly rare.*
- *Temporary work was valued by some respondents because of the flexibility it offers to workers and employers.*
- *One respondent felt that workers were "happy" and "grateful" to have temporary work, while others felt that temp workers caused feelings of isolation and unfair treatment.*

11.5 HJAC serves an under-serviced group

Conclusion
- HJAC provides services to an under-serviced group, in particular older workers who may be uncomfortable with mainstream employment services.

Support
- *There is diversity in the client population in terms of different levels of education. Half of clients are 'older workers' (45 years of age or more). Some reported feeling uncomfortable with other employment services. This suggests a need for diversity of employment service approaches.*

Recommendation
A diverse range of employment services should be available in the community in order to effectively reach groups with different needs and preferences.

Support
- *From its original purpose, HJAC has the potential to fill the gap of serving dislocated workers in groups too small to have their own action centre. The culture of the centre offers an environment that some clients find more comfortable. In this way HJAC was seen as being able to augment what is offered in the community from the six major employment service providers.*

11.6 Education is a key credential

Conclusion
- Basic education is an important factor in employability. Nearly one quarter (23%) of HJAC clients do not have a high school diploma.

Recommendation
- Local agencies and the community more broadly should support adults seeking employment in obtaining their high school diplomas or equivalency certificates.

Support
- *Most employers require employees to have a high school diploma either for initial hiring or to transition to full-time positions.*
- *HJAC staff members see the four main challenges faced by their clients as being computer skills, age, education, and transportation.*

11.7 Clients want direct links with employers

Conclusion
- Many clients tell staff that they want the centre to connect them with employers. This essentially amounts to the role of a temp agency, except that the centre would not be the employer or receive payment from employers.

Recommendation

- Action centres and employment service agencies should work more closely together to connect clients with employers, possibly through job developers. This could involve developing better referral mechanisms for clients in order to tap into existing relationships between employment service providers and employers.

Support

- *Several client, employer, and staff interviews suggested that HJAC could better support clients in finding employment by establishing connections directly between workers and employers.*

11.8 Transportation is a barrier to accessing employment

Conclusion

- The cost of transportation is a barrier to clients in job searching activities, which limits their success in finding employment.

Recommendation

- Community partners, possibly including the Hamilton Street Railway, the City of Hamilton, and other agencies, should collaborate to improve access to affordable transportation for job seekers. This could entail increased funding for bus tickets or changes to eligibility requirements for the Affordable Transit Pass.

Support

- *HJAC staff members see the four main challenges faced by their clients as being age, education, transportation, and computer skills.*
- *Bus tickets could be available to support clients in job searching in order to overcome some barriers to transportation.*

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APPENDIX A: ORIGINAL SURVEY

SPRC
SOCIAL PLANNING & RESEARCH COUNCIL OF HAMILTON

162 King William Street, Suite 103, Hamilton, ON L8R 3N9
Phone: 905.522.1148 Fax: 905.522.9124 E-mail: sprc@sprc.hamilton.on.ca
Website: sprc.hamilton.on.ca

A United Way Agency

Experience of Skills Development:

Participant Survey

We are working with local employment support service agencies to conduct a survey of people who are enrolled in retraining programs. We want to find out about your experiences going back to school or taking other types of training.

The survey should take about 10-15 minutes, and your answers will be kept completely confidential. Your name will not be connected to any of your comments. The survey is voluntary and you can skip questions or stop the survey at any time.

The goal of this study is to help educate the community around what works and what does not work so well in terms of skills development programs.

Instructions:

1. Complete the survey electronically.
2. Save the completed survey to your hard drive.
3. Attach the survey to an email addressed to: mfraser@sprc.hamilton.on.ca

Or

Print the survey, complete it by hand and mail it to:

Mark Fraser

162 King William St.

Suite 103

Hamilton, ON

L8R 3N9

Please return the survey as soon as possible.

If you have any questions about the survey or about the research in general, please contact Mark Fraser, Senior Social Planner, by phone at 905-522-1148 extension 318 or by email at mfraser@sprc.hamilton.on.ca.

1. **What type of training program are you enrolled in? What is the focus of the training? (e.g., medical office administration)**

2. **What government program is assisting you with funding the cost of the training? (e.g. Second Career)**

3. **Is your program provided through a community college, a career college, or a training school?**

   ☐ Community College ☐ Career College ☐ Training School

4. **What is the name of the school?**

5. **Is your training program related to the type of work you were doing before or are you pursuing a new career path? (Please explain)**

6. **On a scale from 1 to 4, 1 being "Very Easy" and 4 being "Very Difficult", how would you rate the level of difficulty of the program in terms of the academic requirements?**

   ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4

7. **What is the most challenging part of the course/program? (e.g., statistics, memorizing new information)**

8. **How has your life changed since you enrolled in your training program?**

9. **What, if any, challenges have you faced since beginning your training program?**

9b. Have you faced any financial challenges?

☐ Yes ☐ No

If "Yes", please explain:

What would have helped you? What could be improved to better support you?

9c. Have you faced any childcare challenges?

☐ Yes ☐ No

If "Yes", please explain:

What would have helped you? What could be improved to better support you?

9d. Have you faced any social/recreation/leisure challenges?

☐ Yes ☐ No

If "Yes", please explain:

What would have helped you? What could be improved to better support you?

9e. Have you faced any family challenges?

☐ Yes ☐ No

If "Yes", please explain:

What would have helped you? What could be improved to better support you?

9f. Have you faced any health challenges?

☐ Yes ☐ No

If "Yes", please explain:

What would have helped you? What could be improved to better support you?

9g. Have you faced any other challenges?

☐ Yes ☐ No

If "Yes", please explain:

What would have helped you? What could be improved to better support you?

10. On a scale from 1 to 4, 1 being "No Confidence" and 4 being "Very Confident", how confident are you that this training will result in full-time employment?

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4

10b. Why? Please explain your confidence rating:

Now we have a couple of questions about you.

11. What age are you?

- ☐ 18 to 24
- ☐ 25 to 34
- ☐ 35 to 44
- ☐ 45 to 54
- ☐ 55 to 64
- ☐ 45 to 54

12. Are you male or female?

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female

13. What was the highest level of education you completed prior to retraining?

- ☐ No secondary school diploma
- ☐ Secondary school diploma
- ☐ Some college or university
- ☐ Graduated college or university
- ☐ Trade school
- ☐ Other (please specify):

14. How long were you unemployed before you began your retraining program?

- ☐ 0 to 3 months
- ☐ Between 3 and 6 months
- ☐ Between 6 months and 1 year
- ☐ Between 1 and 2 years
- ☐ Between 2 and 3 years
- ☐ More than 3 years

15. Were you laid-off from your last employment position?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

16. Please list your last three employers and how long you were employed with each of them (we are interested in which sectors you were working in):

17. Do you have any other comments about your experience with retraining, or recommendations on how to make things work better?

The next part of our research will involve interviews with people enrolled in skills development programs, to help us to better understand some of the specific challenges they have faced.

18. Would you be willing to participate in a short interview in about a month from now?

☐ Yes ☐ No

If 'Yes', please include your contact information below:

Name:

Telephone Number:

Thank you for your time! Your ideas and opinions are important to us.

APPENDIX B: BROAD-BASED CLIENT SURVEY

Outcomes of Skills Development: HJAC Client Survey

Hello _____, my name is _____ and I am calling from the Hamilton Jobs Action Centre. I am calling for two reasons: first to check in on your employment status since you participated in training courses through the Action Centre, and second to get your opinions on how we could improve our service.

We have a short survey to help us understand if we are providing the right types of short-term employment related workshops, what is working and what is not working, and how we might improve on the training we provide through the Action Centre.

The survey should take about 10 minutes, and your answers will be kept completely confidential. Your name will not be connected to any of your comments. The survey is voluntary and you can skip questions or stop the survey at any time.

As someone who has taken short-term employment related workshops through the Action Centre, your feedback is very important to us. Would you mind if I ask you a few questions?

If "no", thank the client and wish them well in the future.

If "yes", continue with the survey

1. Since your first visit to the Hamilton Jobs Action Centre in (month) of this year, have you had any paid employment?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Instruction: if the client answers 'Yes' to this question (ie. They have had paid employment since visiting the HJAC), say 'was helpful' in questions a to h. If the client answers 'No', say 'will be helpful' in questions a to h.

2. Are you currently employed?

☐ Yes ☐ No

2a. Could you tell me a bit about the type of the paid employment you've had since (month) - so, whether it is/was part-time, temporary, contract, piece work – and also how long you have been/were working in that position?

Place of work	Type of work	Duration (# of months)

3. Our records show that you completed (#) employment related workshops through the Action Center, including (refer to checklist on Client Information Sheet).

Instruction: Questions a through h ask about specific workshops that the client has completed. Completed workshops are listed on the Client Information Sheet.

3a. On a scale from 1 to 4, 1 being "not helpful at all" and 4 being "very helpful", do you feel that completing the workshop on _____ was/will be helpful in finding work?

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4

Why/why not?

(If employed) Do you use the skills you gained through the workshop in your current job?

☐ Yes ☐ No

If "Yes", how?

3b. On a scale from 1 to 4, 1 being "not helpful at all" and 4 being "very helpful", do you feel that completing the workshop on _____ was/will be helpful in finding work?

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4

Why/why not?

(If employed) Do you use the skills you gained through the workshop in your current job?

☐ Yes ☐ No

If "Yes", how?

3c. On a scale from 1 to 4, 1 being "not helpful at all" and 4 being "very helpful", do you feel that completing the workshop on _____ was/will be helpful in finding work?

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4

Why/why not?

(If employed) Do you use the skills you gained through the workshop in your current job?

☐ Yes ☐ No

If "Yes", how?

3d. On a scale from 1 to 4, 1 being "not helpful at all" and 4 being "very helpful", do you feel that completing the workshop on _____ was/will be helpful in finding work?

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4

Why/why not?

(If employed) Do you use the skills you gained through the workshop in your current job?

☐ Yes ☐ No

If "Yes", how?

3e. On a scale from 1 to 4, 1 being "not helpful at all" and 4 being "very helpful", do you feel that completing the workshop on _____ was/will be helpful in finding work?

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4

Why/why not?

(If employed) Do you use the skills you gained through the workshop in your current job?

☐ Yes ☐ No

If "Yes", how?

3f. On a scale from 1 to 4, 1 being "not helpful at all" and 4 being "very helpful", do you feel that completing the workshop on _____ was/will be helpful in finding work?

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4

Why/why not?

(If employed) Do you use the skills you gained through the workshop in your current job?

☐ Yes ☐ No

If "Yes", how?

3g. On a scale from 1 to 4, 1 being "not helpful" and 4 being "very helpful", do feel that completing the workshop on _____ was/will be helpful in finding work?

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4

Why/why not?

(If employed) Do you use the skills you gained through the workshop in your current job?

☐ Yes ☐ No

If "Yes", how?

3h. On a scale from 1 to 4, 1 being "not helpful at all" and 4 being "very helpful", do you feel that completing the workshop on _____ was/will be helpful in finding work?

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4

Why/why not?

(If employed) Do you use the skills you gained through the workshop in your current job?

☐ Yes ☐ No

If "Yes", how?

Instruction: The following questions are for all clients, no matter how many workshops they have completed.

4. In your opinion, what other types of employment workshops would be helpful in finding work?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

5. Other than employment related workshops, what did you find useful about the Hamilton Jobs Action Centre in terms of helping people to finding work?

6. In your opinion, what could be done to improve the services and supports provided through the Hamilton Jobs Action Centre in terms of helping people to find work?

7. At any point during your unemployment did you apply for the Second Career program?

☐ Yes ☐ No

7a. If "Yes", what happened?

7b. If "No", why not?

8. Finally, can ask what age range you are in?

☐ 18 to 24 ☐ 45 to 54
☐ 25 to 34 ☐ 55 to 64
☐ 35 to 44 ☐ 65 +

(*note: the reason we are interested in age is so we can see if there are differences in the experiences and opinions of younger and older individuals*)

9. As part of our ongoing research, would you be willing to participate in another short telephone interview in about a month from now?

☐ Yes ☐ No

10. If "Yes", include telephone number: _____

Client's Name (*required*):

Instruction: When the survey has been completed, staple the Client Information Sheet to the front of the survey.

APPENDIX C: CLIENT INTERVIEW GUIDE

Precarious Employment

What has been your general experience with job search? (prompts: how long have you been searching? Are you finding jobs to apply to? Are you getting interviews with employers?)

In your experience, what types of jobs are employers offering right now?

What are your thoughts on the general increase in temporary work? How does this affect workers?

Credentials

Do you feel that you have developed new skills through completing courses through the HJAC? (prompts: do you feel that you have the skills to do a wider range of jobs?)

In your experience with job search, how do you feel that employers viewed your qualifications and experience? Do you feel that they valued the certificates that you earned through the HJAC?

Do you feel that the courses you completed through HJAC helped/will help you to get work? Why?

The value of HJAC

How do/did you use the Action Centre? (ie. Frequency of visits; benefits of visits)
Do/did you use the centre as social support?

Have you visited other employment services during your unemployment? What was your experience?

Action Centres operate based on a peer support model, where staff members or Peer Helpers at the centre have also experienced a layoff or a shut down. In your opinion, is there any benefit to having Peer Helpers working in the centre? Why/Why not?

Was there anything else about your experience with job search, employment, or about the HJAC that you think we should talk about? Are there any other comments you would like to make?

APPENDIX D: STAFF INTERVIEW GUIDE

Client Population

What do you see as the main challenges that HJAC clients face in terms of returning to work? (Possible probes: resumes, education, skills, Canadian experience, discrimination, other challenges?)

What types of services or supports are needed to help clients to overcome these challenges?

Precarious Employment

What are the most common types of jobs that HJAC has posted over the last year? Have you noticed a change in the number and 'quality' of jobs available? (Note – quality refers to wages, benefits and job security)

From your perspective, how does the quality of available jobs affect the well being of individuals and families?

Credentials

In your opinion, how do employers view the types of certificates that clients receive from HJAC training courses? (Prompt: Do you think the certificates HJAC offers are valued?)

What other types of qualifications would help an individual compete for the types of jobs you post at HJAC?

In your opinion, why do some HJAC clients sign up for multiple workshops? Are there any advantages or disadvantages of people having credentials in multiple fields?

Do you have any other thoughts or opinions about how HJAC could better prepare and connect people to employment?

APPENDIX E: EMPLOYER INTERVIEW GUIDE

Precarious Employment

What are the most common types of jobs that your organization has offered in the last year?

Have you noticed a change in the number and 'quality' of jobs available over the last few years? (Note – quality refers to wages, benefits and job security)

Have you seen an increase in the number of candidates applying for jobs or otherwise approaching you for hiring?

How do you see the general increase in temporary contract jobs affecting workers? (ie. No job security, low wages, lack of benefits)

Credentials

How do you view qualifications when considering candidates for hiring? How important are credentials? Are there specific kinds of credentials you look for?

Are there any advantages or disadvantage for candidates with credentials in multiple fields?

How do you view experience when considering candidates for hiring? How important is it to have related work experience?

The HJAC provides skills related workshops that provide participants with certificates in areas such as first aid, forklift, WHIMIS, Smart Serve, transportation of dangerous goods, etc. Does your company value these types of certificates? Why/ Why not?

What other types of qualifications would help an individual compete for the types of jobs you are offering?

Do you have any other thoughts or opinions around how the HJAC could better prepare and connect individuals to employment?

APPENDIX F: EMPLOYMENT SERVICE PROVIDER FOCUS GROUP GUIDE

Introduction to the Hamilton Jobs Action Centre

The Hamilton Jobs Action Centre (HJAC) has been operating out of the No Frills Plaza on Main Street East for just over a year. The centre represents a partnership between the MTCU, the United Way of Hamilton/Burlington, and the SPRC as the administrator of the centre.

The centre applies an employee adjustment model of service delivery, which is generally used in situations where a workplace has experienced a layoff or shutdown affecting 50 or more workers. In this generic version of an employee adjustment centre, the target population includes workers (often older workers) who have been a part of smaller scale layoffs.

The cornerstone of the employee adjustment model is that the centre is staffed with 'Peer Helpers' who have also experienced a layoff or company shut down. Peer Helpers are trained to support clients in job search activities, but also provide a level of emotional support as they have similar lived experience.

Another function of the HJAC has been to provide skills development opportunities in the form of short-term employment related workshops that provide a certificate of qualification. Specific workshops focused on skills such as forklift operation, handling of dangerous goods, overhead crane and first aid among others.

Purpose of the Focus Group

1. To understand, from the perspective of local employment service provides, the benefits and drawbacks of providing short-term employment related workshops that provide a certificate of qualification.

2. To understand, from the perspective of local employment service providers, the most effective venue through which to provide these types of skills development programs.

3. To understand, from the perspective of local employment service providers, the value of the HJAC within the context of the current employment service system.